

S. HRG. 114-350

**UNITED STATES POLICY AND MILITARY STRATEGY
IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

MARCH 24; SEPTEMBER 22; OCTOBER 27, 2015



Printed for the use of the Committee on Armed Services

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UNITED STATES MIDDLE EAST POLICY

TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2015

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator John McCain (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators McCain, Inhofe, Sessions, Wicker, Ayotte, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Graham, Reed, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, and King.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman MCCAIN. Good morning. I thank all the witnesses for being here this morning.

The committee meets today to receive testimony on United States policy in the Middle East. This hearing could not be more timely, and I want to thank each of our expert witnesses for appearing before us today on this critical and complex topic: Dr. Ray Takeyh, Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations; Dr. Kenneth M. Pollack, Senior Fellow for Foreign Policy, Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution; Colonel Derek J. Harvey, U.S. Army, retired, Director of the Global Initiative for Civil Society and Conflict at the University of South Florida; Dr. Dafna H. Rand, Deputy Director of Studies and Leon E. Panetta Fellow at the Center for a New American Security.

Last month, the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, testified before this committee, “in my 50-plus years in the intelligence business, I don’t know of a time that has been more beset by challenges and crises around the world.” Nowhere is that truer than in the Middle East.

From Libya and Yemen, to Iraq and Syria, the old order in the Middle East, both the regional balance among states and the social order within states, is collapsing and no new vision has emerged to take its place. This underlying dynamic is made worse by the failure of U.S. strategy and leadership to shape events in this vital part of the world for the better. Instead, unfortunately, we have too often confused our friends, encouraged our enemies, and created a vacuum for hostile states such as Iran and Russia and vicious non-state actors such as al-Qaeda and ISIL.

The President stated our goal is, “degrading and ultimately destroying ISIL.” However, I fear our effort in Iraq may be exacerbating the conditions that gave rise to ISIL in the first place by

overly relying on brutal Iranian-backed Shia militias and insufficiently empowering Sunni Iraqis. The situation is far worse in Syria.

The administration has defined its policy in Syria more by what it will not do rather than by what end state we aim to achieve. The President repeatedly stresses that he will not put boots on the ground and that we will not go after Assad. But we still do not know whether we will defend the Syrian opposition we are training against Assad's barrel bombs. And the administration still believes somehow that Assad will negotiate his own removal from power, even though conditions on the ground do not support it. Our partners are not assured of U.S. resolve by statements of what we will not do. And hope in Syria or anywhere else is not a strategy.

Likewise, nuclear negotiations with Iran are clearly reaching the end game and we should recall how much we have conceded. As Dr. Henry Kissinger testified in January before this committee, an international effort supported by six U.N. Security Council resolutions to deny Iran a nuclear weapon capability has become an essentially bilateral negotiation over the scope of that capability. As Dr. Kissinger put it, "The impact of this approach will be to move from preventing proliferation to managing it."

What has been obscured and possibly downplayed in our focus on the nuclear negotiations is the reality that Iran is not simply an arms control challenge. It is a geopolitical challenge, as we have seen more clearly than ever today.

In Iraq, the same Iranian-backed Shia militias that killed hundreds of American soldiers and marines are dictating the battle plans of the Iraqi Government and exacerbating the sectarian tensions that first led to the rise of ISIL.

In Syria, the Iranian-backed Assad regime, together with Iranian proxies like Hezbollah, continue the slaughter that has killed more than 200,000 Syrians and displaced 10 million more.

In Yemen, only 6 months after President Obama held it up as a successful model of United States counterterrorism, the takeover by Iranian-backed Houthis has pushed the country to the brink of a failed state and a sectarian civil war, strengthening the hand of both al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Iran.

And yet, while Iran is increasing the scope and pace of its malign activities in the region, there is a dangerous delusion that somehow Iran can be a force for good in the region, aligning with the United States in the fight against ISIL. For example, Secretary Kerry recently said of the Iranian military action in Iraq, "the net effect is positive." Similarly, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Dempsey, said, "As long as the Iraqi Government remains committed to inclusivity of all of the various groups inside the country, then I think Iranian influence will be positive."

General David Petraeus gave a realistic picture in a recent interview, which is worth quoting in full: "The current Iranian regime is not our ally in the Middle East. It is ultimately part of the problem, not the solution. The more the Iranians are seen to be dominating the region, the more it is going to inflame Sunni radicalism and fuel the rise of groups like the Islamic State. While the United States and Iran may have convergent interests in the defeat of Daesh, our interests generally diverge. The Iranian response to the

open hand offered by the United States has not been encouraging. Iranian power in the Middle East is thus a double problem. It is foremost problematic because it is deeply hostile to us and our friends. But it is also dangerous because the more it is felt, the more it sets off reactions that are also harmful to our interests—Sunni radicalism and, if we are not careful, the prospect of nuclear proliferation as well.”

This is a perilous moment in history for a region of enormous importance to American national interests. It is clear that we are engaged in a generational fight against brutal enemies and that defeating these enemies will require clear thinking, setting priorities, and a strategy funded by adequate resources.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today on these important questions.

Senator Reed?

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good morning. Let me join Senator McCain in welcoming our witnesses and let me thank the chairman for arranging this hearing in the lead-up to Thursday’s sessions with our combatant commanders responsible for Africa and the Middle East. The timing is absolutely superb. Both regions are facing critical security challenges that will continue to demand our time and consideration for the foreseeable future and beyond, and hearing from experts outside of our Government is an important input into our process.

Among the most significant issues in the Middle East today is whether there will be any nuclear framework agreement reached between the P5 + 1 and Iran. The end of March is fast approaching and, deal or no deal, the outcome of these negotiations will undoubtedly have an impact, not only on the international community’s relations with Iran, but also reverberating across the region, indeed across the world.

In Iraq and Syria, despite the setbacks that extremist fighters have suffered, ISIS remains capable militarily and continues to consolidate its power in the region, including through the coercion of local populations. Coalition airstrikes have enabled Kurdish Peshmerga in northern Iraq and Iraqi security forces, operating with militia forces north of Baghdad and most recently in Tikrit, to begin to retain ground from ISIS. But significant concerns remain about the growing influence of Shia-dominated militias, many with close ties to the Quds Force, and if, when, and how those forces will be integrated into the Iraqi security forces or disbanded.

In addition, increasing reports of human right abuses and brutal violence by Shia militias in Sunni communities retaken from ISIS control, as has been recently reported in Amerli, threaten to exacerbate the sectarian divide in Iraq and undermine efforts by the Abadi government to govern more inclusively.

Also of concern is when Iraqi security forces will be ready to launch a counteroffensive to retake Mosul and how Iran will wield their growing influence inside Iraq.

In Syria, coalition airstrikes have enabled Syrian Kurdish fighters to regain control of Kobani and expand outward, but ISIS remains a formidable force. General Nagata will begin training the

moderate Syrian opposition in the coming month and, if successful, over time these forces could further roll back ISIS gains and assist the coalition to promote the conditions for a political settlement with Assad. I am interested in the views of our witnesses on the potential of the Syrian training initiative to achieve its objectives and the challenges it will face confronting ISIS. I am also interested in your assessment as to whether Iran or Russia could help facilitate an Assad departure.

In North Africa, the deadly events in Tunisia last week are a reminder that ISIS is bent on expanding its power and influence and, despite setbacks, it continues to draw fighters to its self-declared caliphate. While we must continue to apply pressure on ISIS in Iraq and Syria, I believe it will also be critical for the coalition to use diplomatic and other tools of statecraft to more strategically counter ISIS's narrative and undermine their appeal globally. Over the past week, the world has watched the Houthis gain additional territory in southern Yemen, and all indications today are that the country of Yemen is headed towards a protracted civil war. Given United States counterterrorism interests in Yemen, these developments are of deep concern and how the United States will adjust our posture to ensure our CT operations can continue is an issue to monitor closely.

Thank you again for appearing today, and I look forward to hearing from you on these and many other important issues.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you.

We will begin with Dr. Takeyh. Doctor, thank you.

STATEMENT OF DR. RAY TAKEYH, SENIOR FELLOW FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Dr. TAKEYH. Thank you, Senator McCain and Senator Reed, for having me here today. It is always a pleasure to appear with my friends.

I was asked to try to situate Iran's role in the region as the region goes through vulnerable and violent transitions.

I think it is fair to say—and I am not exaggerating—that the Middle East is a region that perennially divides against itself. In the past monarchies and radical republics, secular ideologues battled for influence. Today, another more durable cold war is descending on the Middle East, this time underpinned by sectarian identities. Syria and Iraq are a heart of this new conflict, pitting Iran and the Shia militants against Saudi Arabia and the Sunni sects. The region cannot regain its footing unless these civil wars somehow subside.

More than any country, Iran has always perceived itself as the natural hegemon of the region. For the leadership of the Islamic Republic, the Arab Awakenings have shaken the foundations of the Middle East, making the region more susceptible to their inroads. In the Iranian leaders telling, America is a crestfallen, imperialist state hastily retreating from the region. Today, Tehran does see the United States as unable to impose a solution on the recalcitrant regional problems. Whatever compunction Tehran may have had about American power has greatly diminished over the past years with the hesitations in Syria and Iraq. Today, too often our redlines are erased as carelessly as they are drawn.

The fear gripping Arab capitals is that arms control agreement with Iran will lead to a detente between the United States and Iran. This concern has some justification in fact and in history. During the heydays of arms limitation talks between the United States and the Soviet Union, nuclear accords were often followed by commerce and diplomatic recognition. Washington has often been seduced by the notion that a nuclear agreement can pave the way for other areas of cooperation. At least for now, Iran's leaders abjure such gestures of reconciliation, focusing on exploiting opportunities that have suddenly appeared and pressing their case in various contested areas.

The Islamic Republic's approach to Iran has undergone, in my view, subtle and disturbing changes. The threat from ISIL has led Iran to become more transparent and more aggressive in its approach to Iraq. Iran has stepped into the many vacuums of Iraq organizing its forces, directly defending its key cities, and providing indispensable assistance in a timely manner. Iranian officers, as was mentioned, are embedded with Iraqi units and are leading the campaign against ISIL strongholds. In the process, Iran has been instrumental in stemming ISIL assaults and may account for the shrinkage of its frontiers. However, these successes have come at a terrible cost that could endanger the stability of the region and independence of Iraq itself.

Iran's reliance on the Shia militias as opposed to the Iraqi army has done much to disquiet the Sunni community, further accentuating the sectarian cleavages that divide the country. The rise of ISIL has much to do with the Sunni community's grievances regarding its marginalization in Iraq and elsewhere, such a brazen attempt to empower Shia militias at the expense of Iraqi national institutions further threatens the cohesion of that country. Although the Iraqi Government led by Prime Minister Abadi is concerned about the scope and scale of Iran's interventions, it has limited options given the forces arrayed against it. The Iranian claim that their intervention as opposed to the passivity of the United States and Turkey has saved the day does seem to resonate with some members of Shia and Kurdish communities.

Syria has similarly emerged as a centerpiece of Iran's regional strategy. Syria's divided ethnicities, a central role in Iran's assault on the prevailing Arab order, mean that Assad had many more cards up his sleeves. Washington proclaimed a goal but failed to plan for the actual removal of Assad. It is difficult to predict with any precision how civil wars unfold and how they essentially come to an end. By their very nature, civil wars are unpredictable phenomena, susceptible to sudden shifts and changing fortunes. However, it is not too premature to suggest that the morale of Assad forces at this point is high while the fragmented opposition is suffering not just from lack of arms but also from the absence of international patronage. The infusion of Russian arms, Iranian funds, Hezbollah troops will ensure that Assad may be well maintained.

The Islamic Republic's calculations always differed in Syria than those of the United States. They were confident that Assad could turn back the tide of history if suitably supported. To check Iran's power in the Levant, the United States has to be a more active player in Syria, as was mentioned, and maybe that is going to hap-

pen. The challenge becomes more difficult every day given the scope and scale of the casualties and fatalities.

The success of United States policy in the Middle East, I will finally say, and toward Iran hinges to some extent on the nature of the United States-Israeli alliance. Simply put, Iran today dismisses the possibility of U.S. military retaliation irrespective of its provocations. It is entirely possible that Iranians are once more miscalculating and misjudging America's predilections. Nonetheless, while the American military option has somewhat receded in the Iranian imagination, Israel still somewhat looms larger. Fulminations aside, Iranian leaders have taken Israeli threats more seriously and are at pains to assert their retaliatory options. It is here that the shape and tone of Israeli-American alliance matters most. Should the Iranian regime see divisions in that alliance, they can assure themselves that a beleaguered Israel cannot possibly strike Iran while at odds with its superpower patron. Such perceptions cheapen Israeli deterrence, diminish the potency of Western remaining sticks, and make obtaining a suitable arms control agreement even more difficult.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Takeyh follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY RAY TAKEYH

More than any other nation, Iran has always perceived itself as the natural hegemon of its neighborhood. Iranians across generations are infused with a unique sense of their history, the splendor of their civilization, and the power of their celebrated empires. A perception of superiority over one's neighbors defines the core of the Persian cosmology. The empire shrank over the centuries, and the embrace of Persian culture faded with the arrival of the more alluring western mores, but an exaggerated view of Iran has remained largely intact. By dint of their history and the power of their civilization, Iranians believe that their nation should establish its regional predominance.

However, to ascribe Iran's foreign policy strictly to its sense of nationalism and historical aspirations is to ignore the doctrinal foundations of the theocratic regime. The Islamic revolution of 1979 left a permanent imprint on Iran's foreign policy orientation. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini bequeathed his successors an internationalist vision that divides the world between the oppressed and the oppressor. Such a view is consistent with Shia political traditions where a minority sect struggled under Sunni Arab rulers that were often repressive and harsh. Thus, the notion of tyranny and suffering has a powerful symbolic aspect as well as practical importance. Iran is not merely a nation seeking independence and autonomy within the prevailing order. The Islamic revolution was a struggle between good and evil, a battle waged for moral redemption and genuine emancipation from the cultural and political tentacles of a profane and iniquitous West. Irrespective of changing nature of its presidents, Iran will persist with its revolutionary and populist approach to regional politics.

For much of the past 3 decades, the Islamic Republic's inflammatory rhetoric and aggressive posture concealed the reality of its strategic loneliness. Iran is, after all, a Persian nation surrounded by Arab states who were suspicious of its revolution and its proclaimed objectives. The Gulf sheikdoms arrayed themselves behind the American shield, Iraq sustained its animosity toward Iran long after the end of its war, and the incumbent Sunni republics maintained a steady belligerence. Iran nurtured its lethal Hezbollah protégé and aided Palestinian rejectionist groups but appeared hemmed in by the wall of Arab hostility. All this changed when Iraq was reclaimed by the Shias and the Arab Spring shook the foundations of the Sunni order. Today, the Guardians of the Islamic Republic see a unique opportunity to project their power in a region beset by unpredictable transitions.

For the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei Arab Spring means "a people have emerged who are not dependent on America." Whatever confidence-building measures his diplomats might be negotiating in Europe, the Supreme Leader insists that Iran is "challenging the influence of America in the region and it is extending its

own influence.” In Khamenei’s depiction, America is a crestfallen imperial state hastily retreating from the region. Today Tehran sees an America unable to impose a solution on a recalcitrant Middle East. Whatever compunctions Tehran may have had about American power greatly diminished with the spectacle over Syria where Washington’s redlines were erased with the same carelessness that they were initially drawn.

The key actors defining Iran’s regional policy are not its urbane diplomats mingling with their Western counterparts in Europe, but the Revolutionary Guards, particularly the famed Quds Brigade. For the commander of the Quds Brigade, General Qassim Soleimani the struggle to evict America from the region began in Iraq. “After the fall of Saddam, there was talk by various individuals that they should manage Iraq, but with Iraq’s religious leaders and Iran’s influence, America could not reach that goal,” proclaimed Soleimani. The struggle moved on and today “Syria is the front-line of resistance.” For the hardliners, the Sunni states attempt to dislodge Assad is really a means of weakening Iran. The survival and success of the Assad Dynasty is now a central element of Iran’s foreign policy.

The fear gripping Arab capitals is that an arms control agreement will inevitably lead to détente with Iran. This concern has some justification in history. During the heydays of arms limitation talks between the United States and the Soviet Union, nuclear accords were often followed by commerce and diplomatic normalization. Washington has often been seduced by the notion that a nuclear agreement can pave the way for other areas of cooperation. The challenge for the United States is to defy its own history. America must find a way to impose limits on Iran’s nuclear ambitions through negotiations while restraining its regional ambitions through pressure. This will require rehabilitation of America’s battered alliance system in the Middle East. Strategic dialogues and military sales can only go so far. Washington’s cannot reclaim its allies’ confidence without being an active player in the Syria and Iraq. So long as America exempts itself from these conflicts then its other pledges ring hollow to a skeptical Arab audience.

IRAQ: IRAN’S NEW FRONTIER

The Islamic Republic’s approach to Iraq has undergone a subtle and important change. For much of the period in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion, Tehran’s overriding objective had been to prevent Iraq from emerging as the dominant power in the Persian Gulf contesting Iranian quest for hegemony. Thus, it was crucial for the theocratic regime to ensure the Shia political primacy. However, Iran also guarded against any spillover from the enraging civil war that was threatening Iraq’s cohesion. Dismemberment of Iraq into three fledgling states at odds with each other would present Iran with more instability in its immediate neighborhood. To pursue its competing goals, Iran embarked on a contradictory policy of pushing for elections and accommodating responsible Sunni elements while at the same time subsidizing Shia militias who are bent on violence and disorder.

The threat emerging from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has led Iran to become much more transparent and aggressive in its approach to Iraq. Iran has stepped into the many vacuums of Iraq: organizing its forces, directly defending its key cities and providing indispensable assistance in a timely manner. Iranian officers are embedded with Iraqi units and are leading campaigns against ISIL strongholds. In the process, Iran has been instrumental in stemming ISIL’s assaults and may account for shrinkage of its frontiers. However, these successes have come at costs that could endanger the stability of the region and the independence of Iraq itself.

Iran’s reliance on the Shia militias as opposed to the Iraqi army has done much to disquiet the Sunni community, further accentuating the sectarian cleavages that divide that hapless country. Given that the rise of ISIL has much to do with the grievances of the Sunni community regarding its marginalization in Iraq, such a brazen attempt to empower the Shia militias at the expense of Iraqi national institutions further threatens the cohesion of that country. Although the Iraqi Government of Prime Minister Abadi is concerned about the scope and scale of Iranian intervention, it has limited options given the forces arrayed against it. Iran’s claim that its intervention as opposed to the passivity of the United States and Turkey has saved the day does seem to resonate with both the Shias and the Kurds.

To be sure, Iran has even begun reaching out to a segment of the Sunni community with its offer of arms and aid. The message of assistance is buttressed by the claim that the international community and the United States are indifferent to the plight of Iraq. It is best for the Sunni community to come to terms with Iraq’s new benefactor, the Islamic Republic of Iran. This message has thus far not been well-

received by the Sunni leadership. As the result of ISIL's assault and Iranian response, Iraq today once more stands divided against itself.

Yet another disturbing aspect of Iran's machinations in Iraq is its plans for the Shia militias potentially beyond Iraq. Iran's model of operation in Iraq is drawn from its experiences in Lebanon in the early 1980s. At that time, Iran amalgamated a variety of Shia parties into the lethal Hezbollah. In recent years, Hezbollah has emerged as not just Iran's most reliable terrorist ally but an Iranian proxy in variety of the region's conflicts. The Hezbollah shock troops have appeared not just in Lebanon but also in Syria and Iraq. The purpose of Iran's military dispatches and its organization of the Shia militias may have been limited to Iraq but as the region further descends into a sectarian conflict, these forces may yet serve as an instrument of Iranian power throughout the Middle East.

SYRIA: THE EPICENTER OF THE NEW MIDDLE EAST

The Arab Spring and its promises of peaceful democratic change grounded to a halt in Syria. Bashar Assad followed the grisly footsteps of his father in massacring his countrymen. The civil war in Syria is not just tearing up that country but it is defining the future of the region. The Middle East is a region that perennially divides against itself. The late Malcom Kerr, one the preeminent historians of the region, once described the 1960s as a time of an Arab cold war with the monarchies and radical republics struggling against each other. Power more so than ideology defined that cold war, thus allowing it to gradually fade. Today, a different and a more durable cold war is descending on the Middle East, this time underpinned by sectarian identities. Syria is at the heart of this conflict, pitting Iran and the Shia militants against Saudi Arabia and the Sunni sector. The region cannot regain its footing unless the Syrian civil war somehow ends.

In the heady days of the Arab Spring, despots were collapsing with alacrity that heartened even the most cynical observers of the Middle East. A region known for authoritarian stability was suddenly faced with mass protests and calls for democratization that were proving successful. "Assad must go" was proclaimed from the seat of Western chancelleries. How could he not go when the more formidable House of Mubarak collapsed with such ease? And how could the president of the United States not call for the departure of an adversary after he had called for the eviction of America's most trusted ally when he faced a popular revolt.

Still, Syria proved different. Its divided ethnicities, its central role in Iran's assault on the prevailing Arab order, mean that Assad had many more cards up his sleeves. Washington proclaimed a goal but failed to plan for the actual removal of Assad. It is difficult to predict with precision how a civil war unfolds. By their very nature, civil wars are unpredictable phenomena, subject to sudden shifts and changing fortunes. However, it is not too premature to suggest that the morale of Assad forces is high while the fragmented opposition is suffering not just from lack of arms but also the absence of international patronage. The infusion of Russian arms, Iranian funds and Hezbollah troops will ensure that Assad is well-maintained. The opposition can add to this misfortune the image of Syria's tyrant begin accredited by the United Nations for dismantling chemical weapons he was not supposed to have, much less use.

The Islamic Republic's calculations always differed from those of the United States. The mullahs were confident that Assad could turn back the forces of history. To check Iran's power in the Levant, the United States has to an active player in Syria. Through provision of arms to reliable rebels, taking a firm stand against Russian and Iranian mischief, it is still possible to dislodge Assad from power. The challenge becomes more difficult every day. Too many lives have already been lost and too much advantage has already been ceded to Assad and the Ayatollahs. To reverse this trend will prove a formidable, but ultimately, an indispensable task.

AMERICA'S ROLE

Although the United States has been effective in estranging Iran from its European allies and its traditional Russian protector, we have played a limited role in affecting Iran's position in the Middle East. Beyond arms sales to Arab state and attempts to assuage Israeli concerns, we have not undertaken a systematic effort to isolate Iran in its immediate neighborhood. Under the rubric of a policy of coercion, all of Iran's seeming regional assets have to be contested. From the Shia slums of Baghdad to the luxurious palaces of the Gulf, Iran has to find a new, inhospitable reality as it searches for partners and collaborators.

The success of America's Iran policy to some extent hinges on the nature of United States-Israeli alliance. Simply put, Iran today pointedly dismisses the possi-

bility of United States military retaliation irrespective of its provocations. It is entirely possible that Iranians are once more misjudging America's predilections. Nonetheless, while America's military option has receded in the Iranian imagination, Israel still looms large. Fulminations aside, Iranian leaders take Israeli threats seriously and are at pains to assert their retaliatory options. It is here that the shape and tone of United States-Israeli alliance matters most. Should the clerical regime sense divisions in that alliance, they can assure themselves that a beleaguered Israel cannot possibly strike Iran while at odds with its superpower patron. Such perceptions cheapen Israeli deterrence and diminish the potency of the west's remaining sticks.

All this is not to suggest that Washington cannot criticize Israeli policies, even publicly and forcefully. The ebbs and flows of the peace process will cause disagreements and even tensions between the two allies. But, as it plots strategies for resuming dialogue between Israel and its neighbors, the administration would be wise to vociferously insist that the dynamics of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations will not affect Washington's cooperation with Israel on Iran.

Despite all professions of common interests and subtle and indirect hints of cooperation to come, the Islamic Republic will only alter the dimensions of its foreign relations if it is confronted with a dramatic threat. As in 2003, Khamenei will be prone to pay a high price for his survival. Should we gain sufficient coercive leverage then we will be in a position to alter Iran's policies. Under these circumstances, we would strive for restricting Iran's nuclear program as opposed to the highly problematic task of conditioning its enrichment activities. Iran would be asked to cease subverting its neighbors and limit its support to Hezbollah and Hamas to political advocacy. Human rights would have to assume a high place in our negotiations—Iran must be pressed to honor international norms on treatment of its citizens. In the end, it is important to stress that the confrontation between the United States and Iran is a conflict between a superpower and a third-rate autocracy. We should not settle for trading carrots and sticks and hoping for signs of elusive moderation from truculent theocrats. A determined policy of pressure can still ensure that the Islamic Republic will be a crestfallen, endangered and therefore a constructive interlocutor.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you.
Dr. Pollack?

**STATEMENT OF DR. KENNETH M. POLLACK, SENIOR FELLOW,
FOREIGN POLICY, CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY, THE
BROOKINGS INSTITUTION**

Dr. POLLACK. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed, distinguished Senators. It is always a great pleasure to address this committee, and I thank you for having me back.

Mr. Chairman, I have prepared written testimony, and I would ask that it be entered into the permanent record.

Chairman MCCAIN. Without objection.

Dr. POLLACK. Thank you.

With that in mind, I am going to emphasize just four points from my written remarks that I think are worth putting on the table as part of this conversation.

The first of them is, of course, the problems Middle East were long in the making, and therefore they are unlikely to be quick in solving. They reflect, as Senator McCain mentioned in his opening remarks, the breakdown of the post-war political order. They are a result of the slow failure of the states of the Muslim Middle East over the past 20 to 30 years, coupled with rather volatile swings in United States policy over the last 15 years and most recently a significant American disengagement from the region. We need to recognize, as we consider how best to reshape our policy toward the region, that it is going to take a similarly long-term approach to deal with the many problems of the region.

And here I think it important to note that one of the greatest problems that the United States has had when dealing with the problems of the Middle East over the past 40 to 50 years has been that we have consistently and unfortunately prioritized short-term political expediency over our long-term strategic interests. This is one—not the only, but an important element of the chaos and turbulence that we now face in the region. And if we are going to be serious about trying to guide the region to a better place, one where our interests are less threatened and better protected, we are going to have to start prioritizing those long-term strategic interests over the short-term political considerations.

Second, al-Qaeda and ISIS and the growth in Iranian influence across the region are significant threats to American interests, but they are not the core problems of the region. They are, in fact, symptoms of the deeper problems of the region. As a result of the state failures and American missteps in the region, we have seen security vacuums in failed states open up in a number of key states. The Iranians and al-Qaeda have filled those vacuums. That is what they do. They creep in wherever they are able.

The proper way to fight them, as we should have learned from our long experience in this respect, is to fill the security vacuums and deal with the failed states. You cannot defeat terrorism simply by killing terrorists. It does not work. We have to address the underlying grievances that give rise to the terrorist problems to begin with, and similarly, we need to remember that Iran is itself an alien force in the Arab world, which the Arabs will reject if given the opportunity to do so.

I think the best example that this is both the right answer and the plausible solution to our problems is provided by our experience in Iraq from 2007 to 2009. In 2006, Iraq was in a state of complete civil war. The state had broken down. Al Qaeda dominated part of it and the Iranians another part of it. But finally in 2007, after of litany of mistakes, which the members of this committee rightly and regularly criticized, the United States finally adopted the right set of policies in Iraq. We secured the populace. We forged a new power sharing agreement among the warring factions. We brought the alienated Sunni community back into Iraq's political system, and as a result, we ended the civil war and stabilized the country.

And the result was that the Iraqis, with considerable American assistance, but with them largely in the lead—the Iraqis drove out al-Qaeda in Iraq, which had already declared itself the Islamic State of Iraq, the precursor of today's ISIS. And not only did they drive out AQI, they also drove out Iran. In Operation Charge of the Knights and the subsequent military operations that followed, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki had a brief moment of real nationalism, and he and his people, united, drove out both the terrorists and the Iranians. This is the right solution to the problems of al-Qaeda, of ISIS, and of expanding Iranian influence in the region.

Third point. For this reason, the civil wars of the region in Iraq, in Syria, in Libya and Yemen, with the threat of civil wars breaking out elsewhere, in Jordan, conceivably in Egypt or Bahrain, these have to be our first focus. They have become the engines of instability in the Middle East. I will say that I think that the policy articulated by the President in September of 2014 and later elabo-

rated on by Chairman Dempsey before this committee several days later is largely the right approach. I would agree that that strategy must encompass the termination of the Assad regime as well, but broadly speaking, the policy articulated by the President and the Chairman are the right approaches to dealing with the civil wars, at least in Iraq and Syria, which are the two most important of the civil wars we face.

The key question is whether these efforts will be properly resourced and implemented by the entirety of the U.S. Government. If they are, there is every reason to believe that they can work. However, I fear that we are making the same mistake that we made in 2001 when we intervened in Afghanistan, in 2003 when we intervened in Iraq, in 2011 when we intervened in Libya, and again in 2011 when we withdrew from Iraq. And that is, we made a major military move unaccompanied by concomitant political, diplomatic, and economic measures designed to translate military operations into meaningful foreign policy achievements.

We need to remember that the problem of ISIS is bigger than just the problems of Iraq and Syria, but so too the problems of Iraq and Syria are also bigger than just the problem of ISIS. If all we do is defeat ISIS in Iraq and degrade it in Syria, we will probably accomplish nothing. It will be back. The civil wars there will rage on and new terrorist groups just like them will be generated by those conflicts.

Finally, I think it important to recognize and count in our foreign for the fact that we have almost certainly not seen the last of the Arab Spring. Unless there is meaningful change, political, economic, and social, in the Muslim Middle East, the unrest will be back. We do not know when. We do not know how. We do not know in what form. But it is highly likely that it will return and possibly in more virulent form. This time around this wave of unrest left us with four failed states that turned into civil wars and a host of even more repressive governments and even more vicious terrorist groups than we faced before. We cannot know what a next wave will produce.

But I would simply say in closing that the smartest answer that the United States could adopt to that question, to that uncertainty is to not run that social science experiment at all, but instead to press and to enable the Arab states to engage in a process of reform that is the only meaningful alternative to repression followed by revolution.

Thank you, Senator.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Pollack follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY KENNETH M. POLLACK

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Senators, I am honored to be able to appear before you to discuss United States policy toward the Middle East.

I came to Washington and began work on the Middle East in the United States Government at the end of the Iran-Iraq War. During that period, the Middle East has rarely ever seemed “good” and only briefly ever hopeful, but I have never seen its problems as bad as they are now. The region’s current dreadful, dangerous situation demands that we reassess American policy toward the Middle East to ask how best we can secure our interests today, and perhaps help guide the region—or key parts of it—toward a better future.

The United States continues to have vital interests in the Middle East, and our actions (and inactions) have been an important contribution to its present dismal

state. The United States was not wholly culpable for the current situation in the region, but we were also hardly blameless. Many of its problems might have been averted or mitigated by different American policies at various points over the past 30–40 years. Had we wanted to move the region in a better direction, we had many chances to do so. Unfortunately, successive American administrations have prioritized short-term expediency over long-term strategic benefit, and we missed those opportunities time and again.

To my mind, a concomitant point is that the problems of the region did not happen overnight, even if some of their symptoms caught us by surprise over the past five years. All of them were long in the making, and thus none of them lend themselves to quick fixes. Again, it has been the American predilection for quick fixes—for slapping a figurative Band-Aid on the latest Middle East conflagration and then trying to ignore it—that has brought us to the current state of affairs. The problems of the Middle East have become too deep and too wide to be treated in such fashion.

SOME HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Mr. Chairman, it is of critical importance that we recognize the historical forces at work that have brought us to the current circumstances in the region. Not as an excuse for an inaction, but rather to understand how we got to where we are so that we can better understand what will likely be necessary to reach a better future.

At root, what is going on in the Middle East is the break down of the post-World War II order. That, not the borders drawn after World War I, is the real source of the problems. After the Second World War, the colonial powers of France and Britain were slowly forced to give up their control over the states of the region. They were replaced, across the Arab world and Iran, by autocracies of two kinds: monarchies or secular dictatorships (which we euphemistically referred to as “republics”). None of these governments had much legitimacy, even the monarchies which generally took power during the inter-war period and so had little claim to tradition or longevity.

Nevertheless, they proved more or less functional for the first several decades after the war. All of them developed modest economies fueled largely by oil, either directly from their own oilfields or indirectly via remittances and aid transfers. All of them featured top-heavy and deeply corrupt bureaucracies responsible for employing a disproportionate share of their workforces. All of them indulged highly dysfunctional educational systems that eventually failed to produce the kind of innovative labor pool necessary for information-age economies. All of them built repressive security institutions that instilled fear in their populations and convinced all but the most desperate or reckless from protesting against the systems. From the 1940s through the 1990s, these regimes clunked along, providing the bare minimum of goods and services to their population, often excusing their performance by blaming external conspiracies focused on Israel, the United States or the West more broadly.

Beginning in the 1990s, these systems began to come under pressure and to fail. Out of control demographics begat workforces too big to be employed by the public sector. For a great many Arabs (and Iranians), the corruption, incompetence and callousness of the regimes that had seemed like bearable problems when times were better, suddenly became unbearable as times got harder. The rapid advance of information technology enabled economies in East Asia and Latin America to surge ahead of the Muslim states, while the proliferation of that technology brought home to more and more people in the Muslim Middle East the revelation that they were falling behind. In the vast majority of cases, the regimes responded by becoming more repressive, crushing any who proposed an alternative way of organizing their societies. The regimes clung to power, but the repression only intensified the unhappiness of their citizens.

An “expectations gap” opened up across the Arab world and Iran, between the circumstances that the people found themselves and where they believed they ought to be. As it has everywhere else around the world and across time, that expectations gap created large-scale internal unrest. By the late 1990s, it had already produced attempted (but failed) revolutions, insurgencies and terrorism. In the region and in the West, many began to call for political, economic and social reform in the Muslim Middle East—reform as the only realistic alternative to revolution or repression. But those calls were not heeded and in 2009 in Iran and 2011 across the Arab world, these problems finally exploded in what we call the Green Revolution and the Arab Spring.

Those revolts produced two very different, but equally dangerous outcomes. In Libya, Syria and Yemen, the unrest was adequate to destroy the control of the old regime. However, because the regimes had successfully prevented any alternative

conceptions of organization from emerging, there was nothing to take their place. They became failed states, enabling power vacuums to emerge, which in turn produced civil wars among various sub-state identity groups who fought for power, to avenge past wrongs, and out of fear that failure to do so would bring about their destruction by extremists among the other groups.

In virtually all of the other Arab states and Iran, the regimes were able to stamp out the unrest before it could snowball into revolution, but only at the price of even greater repression. In so doing, they capitalized on widespread fears that unrest would produce chaos and civil war as in Libya, Syria and Yemen. Tolerance for repression has some other sources as well. In Morocco and Jordan, the monarchs have promised far-reaching (and popular) reforms but have so far under-delivered on those promises, while in Lebanon and Algeria, the memory of their own previous civil wars has dampened enthusiasm for protest.

But renewed repression inevitably has its price. In places like Bahrain and Egypt, it has produced festering discontent and terrorism. Many of the other states of the region remain fragile to say the least. In Algeria and Jordan, public unhappiness lurks just below the surface of public discourse. In Saudi Arabia, the new king, Salman, felt it necessary to disburse cash to buy acceptance for his accession in a manner reminiscent of Caligula and Nero. Ultimately, repression and fear of civil war can only produce a (false) stability for so long. If there is not reform, there will eventually be more revolutions, failed states, civil wars, insurgencies and terrorism.

AMERICAN DISENGAGEMENT

There is one last piece of the historical puzzle that needs to be put on the table before we can begin to discuss how the United States might begin to help the Middle East dig it's way out of it's current situation. That is the role of the United States itself.

Even after the British finally surrendered their colonies in the 1940s and '50s, London continued to serve as the great power guarantor and mediator across the Middle East. In the Persian Gulf, Britain protected Saudi Arabia and the small Emirates as they grew into important oil producers. London backed the Jordanian monarchy and checked the designs of radical regimes from Egypt's efforts in Yemen to Iraq's designs on Kuwait.

Americans did not always like the way that the British oversaw the Middle East. The Truman Administration prevented Great Britain from overthrowing the Mossadeq government. While the Eisenhower Administration turned around and embraced that project, it later blocked Britain and France from ousting Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser in 1956. In part for that reason, when the British announced that they were withdrawing from "East of Suez" in 1971, the United States was reluctant to their place.

Nevertheless, circumstances forced us to do so. Initially, we tried to empower regional proxies—first Israel, then Iran, and then Saudi Arabia—to protect American (and Western) interests in the region instead. But the Israelis were hated by the Arabs, the Saudis lacked the will or the capacity to act decisively, and then the Shah of Iran was overthrown in 1979. Indeed, the Iranian revolution proved to be a watershed. Our strongest regional ally was replaced by our most strident and charismatic foe, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The threat his revolutionary Iranian state posed to American allies across the region forced the United States to become militarily involved in the Persian Gulf for the first time, a commitment expanded when Iran's defeat (with American assistance) in the Iran-Iraq War created the opportunity for Saddam Husayn to invade Kuwait and pose a different, but equally dangerous threat to the region's vital oil exports.

And so Washington, finally shouldered the burden once borne by London. The United States became the ultimate guardian of the region's oil flows, the mediator of many of its disputes, the deterrent to its worst threats. The true hegemon of the Middle East. As part of that evolution, American policy-makers increasingly were forced to accept that the region's internal politics were important to American interests because internal problems could affect regional stability and its oil exports.

Of course, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the Bush '43 Administration attempted to eradicate some of the region's problems permanently by military force. Their invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan may have been well-intentioned (or not, as historians will ultimately decide) but they could not have been more poorly executed. The result was two long and painful wars that created a public desire to diminish America's role in the Middle East, if not end it altogether.

The Obama Administration took office determined to make that wish reality to the maximum extent possible. The United States disengaged from Iraq pell-mell, quickly undoing much of the progress painstakingly achieved in 2007–2009. Else-

where across the region, the United States absented itself from myriad other events. Washington stopped pressing for political and economic reform among the Arab states, turned its back on the Arab-Israeli peace process, and allowed civil wars to erupt and spread unchecked. When the Green Revolution broke out in Tehran and the Arab Spring spread across the region, Washington offered thin rhetorical support but nothing of substance.

Ultimately, however, the Da'ish (or ISIS or ISIL or Islamic State) offensive of June 2014 that overran Mosul and much of northern Iraq forced the United States to recognize that it had swung the pendulum of American involvement with the Middle East too far in the opposite direction from the militarized interventions of the Bush '43 era, toward an equally dangerous isolation from the region. President Obama's decision to re-intervene militarily in August and his shift in strategy declared in September 2014 were critically important steps in the right direction, although there is still a great deal to be done to turn his statements into concrete programs in both Iraq and Syria.

Ultimately then, the problems of the Middle East can be traced back to a combination of the breakdown of the internal order of the region as the semi-functional autocracies established after World War II have slowly grown ever more dysfunctional, coupled with the withdrawal of its traditional great power hegemon. Stabilizing the region will mean dealing with both of these problems, although neither lends itself to a simple turning back of the clock. However, even before these major tasks can be contemplated, there is a more immediate priority: dealing with the failed states/civil wars that have become the key drivers of instability in the Middle East.

DEALING WITH THE CIVIL WARS OF THE REGION

Today, the principal source of the turbulence and violence threatening the Middle East are the four civil wars currently raging in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Libya. Before the United States can start to address the deeper problems of the failure of the Muslim Middle Eastern state system, it first needs to help mitigate or eliminate these engines of instability.

Some of these civil wars threaten U.S. interests directly. In particular, Iraq and Libya are important oil producers. All of them threaten U.S. interests indirectly, by breeding vicious terrorist groups, generating millions of refugees that threaten to overwhelm neighboring states, radicalizing regional populations and potentially sucking their neighbors into interventions they cannot win. Indeed, historically, civil wars have had a bad habit of causing civil wars in neighboring states as well as metastasizing into regional conflicts.

Moreover, civil wars have proven historically difficult to contain. I think it worth noting that the Obama Administration, despite all its rhetoric to the contrary, pursued a determined policy of containment toward the Syrian civil war until spillover from that civil war (in the form of Da'ish) helped push Iraq back into civil war. At that point, the Administration rightly recognized that containment of the Syrian civil war had failed and the United States would have to adopt a more pro-active policy to try to bring about an end to the conflict—and to the renewed civil war in Iraq it helped rekindle.

It is an unfortunate reality that it is widely believed that it is impossible to do anything about "somebody else's civil war." A well-developed body of historical scholarship on civil wars demonstrates that while it is not simple or straightforward for a third party to end a civil war peacefully, it is hardly impossible. Indeed, the policies articulated by President Obama on Iraq and Syria in September 2014 conform nicely to the lessons of this history, and therefore should give us some confidence that they are feasible, if properly resourced and executed.

Iraq. In Iraq, as I and others have reported, the narrow military effort to defeat Da'ish is going quite well. The real problems, including with the military piece, are largely political. As is well understood at this point, Iranian-backed Shiite militias are playing an outsized role in Iraq's military victory, frightening the Sunni populace they are meant to liberate with the specter of ethnic cleansing. The militias need to be corralled by Iraqi Army formations, preferably guided by American advisors accompanying them in the field. That will require further development of Iraq's security forces and additional American advisors.

Of equal or greater importance is to forge a new power-sharing arrangement between the Sunni and Shiite Arab communities as the United States did in 2007–2008. Too often, the Obama Administration has dismissed this as a luxury, an academic nicety rather than a practical necessity. They are wrong. Without such a new power-sharing arrangement, Iraq's Sunni Arabs will have no sense of the Iraq they are being asked to fight for. They have no intention of going back to 2011, when

a Shiite prime minister manipulated Iraq's existing political structure to repress their community. Without such a power-sharing agreement, Iraq's Sunnis are likely to resist the central government by force, and in doing so will open the door once again to Da'ish.

Although I could make many additional points about what is needed to translate battlefield victories into meaningful political achievements in Iraq, I will add just one more. This is the need for a thoroughgoing reform of the Iraqi Security Forces to turn them back into the apolitical and largely professional force they had become by 2009—before former Prime Minister Maliki politicized the officer corps and turned the army into an incompetent, sectarian tool for his own narrow political agenda. Doing so will require retaining an American training and advisory presence—along with all of their support forces—for a decade or more. But it is absolutely critical to ensure that Iraq has a reasonably strong and independent military that can be counted to protect all of its minorities and see that the terms of the new power-sharing arrangement is honored by all sides.

Syria. Addressing the problems of the Syrian civil war is even harder. Unlike in Iraq, the Asad regime is deeply unpopular with the majority of the population but the opposition is badly fragmented and dominated by Sunni extremists. In these circumstances, the Obama Administration's stated policy is arguably the only course of action that makes sense given the unique history of Syria and the general history of civil wars. The United States should not want to see either the Asad regime or the Sunni extremists prevail because they can only do so by mass slaughter and the victory of either would then create new threats to U.S. allies. However, the current moderate Syrian opposition is too weak, too fractious and too vilified to serve as the foundation for a viable third force. Consequently, the United States will have to build a new Syrian opposition army—something we have done with success elsewhere.¹ Moreover, we will have to provide it with extensive training, a full panoply of weaponry (including some armor and artillery), and the backing of a major United States air campaign as we did for other indigenous opposition armies in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Libya.

While this strategy certainly can succeed in ending the fighting and compelling a new power-sharing agreement that would stabilize the country, it is not going to be easy. It will take a long time and will require a sustained American commitment throughout. And this is the great question mark hanging over the Administration's approach to Syria. The military program to recruit, train and equip a new Syrian opposition army has proceeded painfully slowly. The process of creating a corresponding political framework is even further behind. Indeed, it is virtually nonexistent. Finally, while there is an argument to be made that progress in Syria can and should follow progress in Iraq, waiting too long there will make the Syrian effort far more difficult when the United States finally gets around to it, and risks the impact of spillover into Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and back into Iraq—which is unlikely to enjoy any post-Da'ish stability if Da'ish continues to have a sanctuary next door.

Libya. Libya will require an approach much like Syria. It too needs a new military, one that is apolitical and professional, capable of defeating all of the partisan forces and then serving as the kind of strong, institution around which a new political system could be organized and enforced. Libya will also require the same kind of power-sharing arrangement to provide an equitable distribution of power and resources among its warring factions (which are primarily geographic—Cyrenaica vs. Tripolitania, Misrata vs. Zintan—although a secular-religious divide is being overlaid on these longer-standing divisions).

Both efforts will require a great deal of external support to succeed. The challenge with Libya is that while it is strategically far more important than the attention it has so far received, it is not as important to American interests as Iraq (and by association, Syria). Given the extent of the actual or proposed American commitments to Iraq and Syria, it seems unlikely that the United States would make a similar effort in Libya.

That means that Libya must largely be a European undertaking. Europe is far more directly affected by the loss of Libyan oil and trade and the increase in Libyan refugees. The problem, which this Committee understands only too well, is that the Europeans have allowed their militaries to atrophy to virtual impotence, and they have shown little willingness or ability to harness their economic and diplomatic resources for difficult, protracted missions like stabilizing and rebuilding Libya. Even

¹For a more extensive explanation of this strategy and why it could succeed in accomplishing American objectives in Syria, see Kenneth M. Pollack, "An Army to Defeat Assad: How to Turn Syria's Opposition Into a Real Fighting Force," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 5 (September/October 2014), pp. 110–124.

though the Europeans would need to furnish the bulk of the combat aircraft, trainers, advisors, weaponry, economic assistance and diplomatic muscle to stabilize Libya, it will invariably require the United States to convince them and enable them to do so. We will probably have to provide political leadership, logistical assistance, military command and control, and possibly some advisors as well if we are to move them to do what is ultimately in their own best interest as well as ours.

Yemen. Yemen is the hardest of all. It is the home of one of the most dangerous al-Qa'ida franchises in the Middle East and the civil war has badly disrupted the current American system of suppressing that threat. But we cannot wish away the ongoing civil war and ultimately, eliminating the threat of al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) will require an end to the civil war itself. The last piece of our Yemeni dilemma is that, as dangerous as AQAP may be, it is not so dangerous that the American people will countenance an invasion and occupation of the country. Nor is Yemen so important as to justify the kind of American effort that the Obama Administration has committed to in Iraq and Syria. Indeed, given how parsimoniously the Administration has resourced its commitments in Iraq and Syria, it seems especially unlikely that they will make a simultaneous effort in Yemen.

Given these difficult realities, America's best recourse in Yemen may be to relocate our counterterror assets across the Red Sea to the Horn of Africa and try as best we can to contain the Yemeni civil war. I recognize that I wrote above that it is very difficult to contain the spillover from a civil war, but I simply see no alternative in the case of Yemen. The only country willing to intervene in Yemen is Saudi Arabia, which probably lacks the capacity to do so effectively. Indeed, the greatest danger stemming from the Yemeni civil war may be the Kingdom's determination to intervene there to try to stave off spillover from the civil war.

For over fifty years, the Saudis have feared that internal conflict in Yemen will infect the Kingdom and spawn a civil war there as well. Despite the fact that Yemen has been wracked by internal conflict for nearly that entire period and it never has caused internal instability in the Kingdom, this has not kept the Saudis from worrying that it someday will. These fears have been exacerbated by (exaggerated) Iranian support for Yemen's Houthi rebels. Now Riyadh fears that Iran is taking over the state on its southern border, to match what the Saudis see as an Iranian "take-over" of Iraq, the country on their northern border.

There is a real risk that the Saudis will keep doubling down in Yemen and in so doing will overstrain themselves—politically, militarily and even economically. The Kingdom cannot afford to get dragged deeper into a Yemeni quagmire it cannot stabilize on its own. This is especially true given the challenges the Kingdom is likely to face from historically low oil prices and exorbitant new financial commitments in an effort to stave off the Arab Spring. The great danger is that the Kingdom could find itself bankrupted and torn apart by an endless commitment to a Yemeni quagmire, as Pakistan has been by its intervention in the Afghan civil wars.

The Kurds. Although the Kurds of Iraq are not in a state of civil war themselves, they deserve a special place in our consideration of how to deal with the civil wars of the region. In a turbulent part of the world, where there are few stable regions and where the United States has few friends, the Kurds of Iraq stand out. Although their security has been compromised by the Da'ish threat, with American air power, weapons and training, they have restored their borders and are taking the fight to the enemy. Their economy remains hobbled by graft and low oil prices, but they remain relatively better off than most of their neighbors—and well ahead of either Syria or the rest of Iraq. And while their political system still has a long way to go, there is the potential for meaningful progress there and some intelligent and enlightened leaders who could show the way if given the tools to do so.

All of this should make the United States particularly well disposed to the Kurds of northern Iraq as we try to stabilize this region and prevent the chaos any farther. It would be best—for the Kurds, for Iraq and for the United States—if Iraqi Kurdistan were an independent nation, but that prospect is at least several years off. In the meantime, America's interests argue for expanding a strategic partnership with the Kurds to include additional military, diplomatic and economic aid. As long as Kurdistan remains a formal part of Iraq and as long as the Iraqi government is one that the United States will want to continue to back, doing so will require constant diplomatic balancing with the sovereign Iraqi government. However, we should think creatively and lean forward in assisting the Kurdistan Regional Government with its priorities, even as we also push them to move in the directions critical for our own interests.

One of the worst mistakes that the United States appears to be making in its policies toward the Middle East is to focus them on the twin threats of Da'ish and Iran. There is no question that both seek to harm American interests, and quite possibly the American people themselves. Neither has our best interests at heart and both have shown the willingness to attack Americans whenever it suits their purposes.

But it would be disastrous to make them the centerpiece of our Middle East policy. Both Da'ish and the spread of Iranian influence are symptoms of the problems of the region, NOT the problem itself. As my friend Vance Serchuk—once a staffer to this committee—recently put it, wherever the United States has allowed a security vacuum to open up in the Middle East, that vacuum has been filled by Iran and al-Qaeda. That has proven true in Iraq, in Syria, in Yemen and partially in Libya (where Iran has not yet found a foothold.) That same competition is also threatening fragile states like Lebanon and Bahrain.

It is distressing to see the United States endlessly repeat the same mistakes. In 2001, the Bush Administration foolishly declared a “War on Terrorism.” After 14 years, that war has failed to eradicate terrorism and even failed to eradicate al-Qaeda, the principal target of that effort. That is not surprising. You cannot fight terrorism simply by killing terrorists. One hundred years of history has made that abundantly clear. And yet, in 2014, the Obama Administration declared war on Da'ish (or ISIL as it prefers to call the group). The war on Da'ish is just as misguided as the Bush Administration's War on Terrorism.

Terrorist groups are nothing but violent revolutionaries. Killing terrorists, while often a necessary component of any strategy is also insufficient to eradicate the problem of terrorism. Only by eliminating the underlying grievances that feed the movement is it possible to do so. That is why the only place where the United States ever successfully “eradicated” al-Qaeda (and then only temporarily) was in Iraq in 2007–2010. We did so by addressing the basic problems of the country: securing the populace, forging an equitable power-sharing arrangement and division of economic resources, bringing Iraq's alienated Sunni community back into the fold, and building a largely apolitical military. The group once known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (which had already declared itself the Islamic State of Iraq, or ISI) was only saved from oblivion by the civil war breaking out in neighboring Syria.

The United States government needs to recognize that the problem of Da'ish is bigger than just the problems of Iraq and Syria, but so too the problems of Iraq and Syria are bigger than just the problem of Da'ish. The United States must fashion a policy to heal the civil wars in Iraq and Syria to drive Da'ish out of these countries. That is the ONLY way to do so. Even if we inflict a catastrophic military defeat on Da'ish in both countries, if we do not address the problems of their civil wars, Da'ish—or something just like it—will be back within a year or two. However, as we should have learned in Iraq, if we end the civil war, the terrorists will be forced out. While they will doubtless find homes in other regional civil wars, failed states and failing states, removing them from Iraq and Syria would be an important step in the right direction.

The same logic applies to Iran's expanding influence as well. Too often, Americans portray the Middle East as a chess match between Washington and Tehran—with all of the other countries and players reduced to pieces on the board. That is a dangerously misguided analogy. Iran is not controlling events in the region and is mostly reacting to them. It has undoubtedly made very significant gains over the past 2–4 years. Today, Iran wields more influence in Iraq than at any time since the Ottoman conquest of Mesopotamia. Its allies hold sway in Lebanon, are the strongest force in Yemen, and are making a modest come back in Syria.

However, it is absolutely critical to recognize that these Iranian gains have all come as a result of failed states and civil wars which the Iranians took advantage of exactly as al-Qaida and Da'ish have. Once again, the best way to diminish and eliminate Iranian influence in these places is to end the civil wars. Once again, Iraq furnishes the best example. In 2008–2009, it was the Iraqis who drove Iran from Iraq just as they effectively drove out AQL. Once the United States finally established security and forged a new power-sharing agreement among Sunni and Shiite Arabs, it was the Iraqis (with considerable American assistance) that drove Iran's principal remaining ally, Muqtada as-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi militia, first from Basra, then Qurnah, Amarah, Kut and Sadr City itself. By the beginning of 2010, Iran had virtually no influence in Iraq because Iraqis felt strong and united in a new sense of nationalism. (Unfortunately, that would collapse after the 2010 elections when the United States failed to enforce the rules of the democratic system, which then allowed Iranian influence back in).

Both Da'ish (and al-Qaeda) and the spread of Iranian influence are threats to American interests because these groups continue to define themselves as enemies of the United States. But we make two disastrous mistakes in thinking that they are the sources of our problems in the region and that the best way to address them is to attack them directly. History has demonstrated that it is possible to fight terrorism and roll back Iranian influence. But the best and only realistic way to do so is to heal the hurts of the region, rebuild its failed states and end its civil wars. Those are the open spaces that both AQ/Da'ish and Iran exploit. Protect those spaces, and neither will find the soil to grow or spread.

RESURRECTING REFORM

Beyond ending the civil wars currently roiling the region, the United States must also push forward policies that will help avoid the creation of new failed states and new civil wars—recognizing that both the Sunni terrorists and the Iranians will be doing the opposite in hopes of creating new hosts to infect. This means embracing the cause of political, economic and social reform in the Muslim Middle East that the United States has toyed with for decades, but never made more than a half-hearted commitment.

The political, economic and social grievances that gave rise to the Green Revolution and the Arab Spring have not gone away. They have been temporarily suppressed. They will be back. We don't know when and we don't know in what form, but they will undoubtedly be back. And a critical goal of American policy moving forward must be to guard against that day heading it off as best we can by pushing the states of the region to adopt reform, not repression, as the only viable long-term solution.

The United States should not avoid the need for political reform simply because it is hard to accomplish. The Middle East is in such bad shape because it is at the beginning, not the end, of a regional movement demanding political change. The more stridently governments resist reform, the more violence there will be. We can try to put off the inevitable but ignoring the need for real change will mean that change, when it inevitably comes, will be violent, producing new revolutions, failed states, civil wars and other problems for the United States and its allies. We cannot avoid the wider set of underlying economic, political and social problems that were the ultimate cause of the Arab Spring and the civil wars it inadvertently produced. If we are to avoid worse, reform is the only path out.

That is a simple statement and unquestionably the right answer for the states of the region to avoid further civil wars and internal unrest. But it is wicked hard in practice. Having come through the searing events of 2011, many of the Arab regimes that survived have concluded that any reform would only encourage greater demands for change that could easily escalate out of control—producing the revolts, state collapse and civil war that they (and we) fear. They aren't entirely wrong. Reform that is handled badly—too fast, too slow, too narrow, too wide—can produce exactly that dynamic. No reform at all, however, is a recipe for disaster.

As a final point on the issue of the importance of reform, it is worth noting the exception to the regional rule. Alone among the states of the Muslim Middle East, Tunisia has embraced dramatic reform and begun a difficult process of real democratization. It has already survived multiple crises where it might easily have veered back toward dictatorship and repression (as Egypt unfortunately has). If its transition is successful, it could prove to be a useful example for other states to follow—the first Arab democracy.

That is a potentially transformative role, one that the United States should nurture. The opposite is also true: were Tunisia to fail, it would be taken by many as a sign that political pluralism and free-market economics are impossible in the Muslim Middle East, thus generating renewed support for repression as the only alternative. For both of these reasons, the United States, and the West more broadly, have a huge stake in the success of Tunisia. Even in an era of shrinking foreign aid budgets, Tunisia is a wise investment and potentially our best bet.

Moreover, other small states with the potential to move further down the path of reform—like Morocco and Jordan—could be usefully persuaded to do so with the promise of more generous aid. Again, these are exactly the kind of investments in the future of the Middle East that can only pay off in the long run, but are in fact the only potential solutions for the deep-seated problems of the region that simply cannot be solved by quick fixes.

Although the United States can and should swing the pendulum of American involvement in the region back toward the center, as the Obama Administration has already begun to do, this cannot be the only answer to our problems. Ending the civil wars of the region and pushing the Arab states to embrace the long process of meaningful political, economic and social reform is not going to be easy. Executing and enabling such policies will require real resources, and a commitment maintained over years if not decades. While public opinion polls indicate considerable willingness on the part of the American people to commit resources to the problems of the Middle East, it seems unlikely that this nation will make another massive commitment to the Middle East, say on a par with the commitment it made to Iraq in 2003–2011, anytime soon.

If the United States is no longer able or no longer willing to bear such costs alone, we are going to need to find others to share the burden. Certainly, the Europeans can provide some assistance, especially in the economic realm. But the Europeans now punch well below their weight in all policy spheres and we should not count on too much from them. Some regional states can contribute economic resources and political clout to certain specific projects, like ending the civil war in Syria, but gone are the days when the Saudis would back any American project no matter how disconnected from their own immediate security concerns. Moreover, even though the Saudis embraced (gradual) reform at home under King Abdullah, at the same time they ardently pursued counter-revolutionary policies that stifled reform abroad. Consequently, we should not assume that the region can do this on its own, even with advice, encouragement and pressure from the United States.

For all of these reasons, the United States may have to begin to look to new players on the Middle Eastern scene to help advance these ambitious, but essential, policy objectives. The two obvious candidates are China and India.

At first blush, this idea may seem ludicrous. The Chinese often see themselves as our ultimate rival for global dominance or at least local dominance in East Asia. They often ally with odious Middle Eastern regimes out of venal self-interest. They try to avoid getting involved in the internal affairs of other countries whenever possible and are often unmoved by aggressive behavior by anyone other than the United States. For its part, India has massive internal issues of its own to sort out, has little military capacity, and is locked in a sixty-year old struggle with Muslim Pakistan.

Yet there are other factors that argue entirely in the opposite direction. China and India are two of the fastest industrializing countries in the world, and are increasingly dependent on Middle Eastern oil (far more so than the United States). Their political systems require continued economic growth and that economic growth is threatened by instability in the oil markets (or just high prices) that can be triggered by instability in the Middle East. Thus, the primary interest of both India and China in the Middle East is the same as America's primary interest there. Moreover, both are developing power projection capabilities and increasingly looking to protect their interests abroad.

The trick will be to persuade the Chinese and Indians that while they may not care about the internal affairs of the states of the Middle East today, they will in the future—and when they do, they are liable to wish that they had cared about it all along. What is required is to induce Beijing and Delhi to understand that the problems of the region are creating chronic internal instability which is ultimately the greatest threat to the oil exports of the region.

If we are able to do so, we will succeed in turning a major challenge for our grand strategy into a major asset. If the Chinese and Indians (to a lesser extent) insist on seeing the United States as an adversary and are willing to associate with states regardless of their actions—foreign or domestic—this will greatly complicate the ability of the United States to dampen the risk of interstate conflict and to press regional regimes to adopt far-reaching reforms. They will always be able to hide behind the Chinese, getting what they need from Chinese businessmen and using Beijing as a diplomatic and (eventually) military counterweight to the United States. Implementing a grand strategy of enabling reform in the Muslim Middle East will be that much more difficult under these circumstances. However, if we are able to bring the Chinese and Indians around, they would then become our allies in the same initiative.

Imagine the impact of these three great powers working in tandem to discourage foreign aggression and encourage internal reform? Imagine if regional reformers had alternative great power backers (one without the taints we have acquired) to turn to for aid in all its forms? Imagine if would-be troublemakers met a united front of Washington, Beijing and Delhi determined to prevent them from causing mis-

chief? Imagine if local regimes found the champions of both East and West determined to move them down the path of reform—and willing to help them do so?

This recognition creates a basis for mutual understanding. If China and India acknowledge their own need for greater stability in the Middle East to ensure the free flow of oil, but recognize that the region is fragile and can be a trap for foreign great powers, then Chinese and Indian policymakers may be receptive to an arrangement that minimizes great power competition in the Middle East, maximizes cooperation, and possibly even establishes a division of labor in which the United States continues to play a leading military and political role, with economic and diplomatic support from Beijing and Delhi.

Whereas India is the world's most populous democracy, China itself has made only grudging political reforms—and certainly has not championed political pluralism abroad. Nevertheless, China's ambivalence about democracy probably won't be a serious stumbling block to cooperation in promoting internal reform and helping to make that possible across the Middle East. The Chinese have demonstrated a high degree of cynicism when it comes to systems of government elsewhere, showing few reservations about democratization in South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Indonesia, let alone farther afield in Europe, Africa and Latin America. As long as a country is doing whatever it is China wants and needs, Beijing has typically shown itself willing to tolerate political reform.

Even where China opposes efforts to promote democracy, such as in North Korea and Myanmar, its concern is principally with preserving regimes friendly to it and avoiding chaotic transitions that could affect its interests. The kind of gradual, indigenously-driven process of political reform (which may or may not produce true democracy depending on the desires of the people themselves) envisioned in this grand strategy should be acceptable to the Chinese if they come to see it as in their interests because it will ensure long-term stability even if comes at the expense of short-term dislocations.

Persuading China and India to help share the burdens of the Middle East will likely consist of more than just compelling conversation. In particular, a critical element in making China and India our partners in this enterprise will be giving them a role in the Middle East commensurate with their growing strength and aspirations. This is going to be particularly hard for the United States with regard to China, because it is going to mean accepting Beijing as our equal in the geopolitics of the Middle East. Rather than making unilateral decisions after minimal consultation with our regional allies, Washington will have to learn to negotiate common policies with Beijing—and Delhi. It will certainly mean lots of painful coordination with other governments, whose concurrence will often be vital for the sake of the wider partnership if not for cooperation on the specific matter itself. It may mean allowing the Chinese and Indians basing rights in the region, both so that they feel comfortable that they can protect their own interests, and so that they are able to exercise their influence jointly with us. It will probably mean agreeing to do some things Beijing's way and other things Delhi's.

All of this would be laborious, frustrating, time-consuming, and even enraging for America's leaders and diplomats, but the rewards would be well worth the effort. Moreover, they appear increasingly necessary given America's diminishing willingness to bear the costs of the Middle East on its own.

THE NECESSITY OF LONG-TERM STRATEGIC FOCUS

I have attempted to cover a lot of ground in this testimony, sketching out the framework of a new American grand strategy for the Middle East. There is a great deal more that would need to be said to explain how these broad approaches could be translated into concrete policies. But such a framework is a necessary starting point both in building such a program and in debating whether it is the right one for the nation. I believe it is, if only because I can think of no other that would better suit our interests in the Middle East, our circumstances, and the tools and resources we have available to us there.

The one critical requirement of this strategy that I fear we may have in inadequate supply is the commitment to see it through. We are an impatient people, especially when it comes to the confounding problems of the Middle East. We have typically sought to fix a problem there, or just fix it-up, and then move on to something we liked more. Unfortunately, the history of our involvement in the region since 1971 has been that every time we have tried this, it has not fixed anything at all, and instead the problem has inevitably come back to bite us later, and require far more effort and resources to address it then. As I have said elsewhere, the Middle East is NOT Las Vegas: what happens there does not stay there.

Nor do its problems admit themselves of quick and easy solutions. It took a long time and a lot of disastrous mistakes (by Arabs, Iranians, Turks, Israelis, Europeans, Americans and many others) to bring the region to its current distressing state of affairs. No American strategy is going to change that quickly. While there are solutions to the problems we face in the Middle East, they require, time, patience and the determination to see them through.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished Senators, our Founding Fathers explicitly created the United States Senate to be the guardians of America's long-term good. To ensure that at least some segment of the nation's leaders had the perspective and the ability to fight for what is in the country's interests beyond tomorrow or even six-months from tomorrow. For that reason, I urge you, as you contemplate United States policy toward the Middle East to be the voice of strategic wisdom. To consider how deep the problems of the region have become, and to press for changes in American policy that put in place the long-term shifts that will be needed to actually deal with the problems of the region, rather than merely trying to paper over them until the next, worse crisis engulfs us.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you.
Colonel Harvey?

**STATEMENT OF COLONEL DEREK J. HARVEY, USA, RETIRED,
DIRECTOR, GLOBAL INITIATIVE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND
CONFLICT, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA**

Mr. HARVEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, ranking minority, and members of this committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify.

I did not submit prepared remarks, but I am going to make some extemporaneous points, and I hope that they are relevant.

First, I agree with almost everything that has been said, so I will just highlight a couple of points about the broader regional trends that we need to take into consideration. Besides the post-Arab Spring dynamics and the failure of governance and institutions, there is a fracturing of society. And one of the overarching themes going here is this conflict within Islam and a conflict within the Ummah. And it manifests itself in several ways. You have the jihadist extremists Sunni-Salafist approach, a takfiri, annihilationist agenda, which is against establishment Islam and the established authorities. And that is at one level. But there is also an intra-jihadist fight going on, and then there is a Sunni versus Shia fight going on at various levels too. And it is at the grassroots level, but it is also at a geopolitical level. So you have got four clear levels of intra-sectarian conflict going on, and then you have an intra-Shia dynamic which is being dominated right now by Qom over the Iraq-based Najaf-Karbala view of a more quietest approach to Islam.

And so we have to take this into consideration because it is at the heart of how many in the region are looking at this through the sectarian divide and the approaches from these sub-national elements and at the National level. You hear it at the senior levels in the UAE, Qatar, and in Kuwait. You also hear it across the region in the Levant. So we have to take that into consideration.

Now, very quickly a couple of quick points.

One, the immediate threat is ISIS, but also an immediate threat currently is the encroachment and empowerment of Iran across the region, and it is the most dangerous, long-term threat. ISIS is not the most dangerous long-term threat, and we are misplacing our priorities and we are forgetting about our strategic long-term interests in securing an independent, sovereign, not-aligned Iraq. Iraq is vital to the stability of the region, and we are at deep risk of

losing Baghdad today. In fact, we may have dug such a deep hole that it is not recoverable for us. And I see a similar pattern emerging to what we had with the Warsaw Pact, Moscow, and their client states, East Berlin, Warsaw, Prague, et cetera where Baghdad, Damascus, and Beirut are simply client states of Tehran.

The current fight against ISIS. I think we are still underestimating the deep support that it has, not only in parts of Iraq and Syria, but also the empathy that it has in the Gulf. The operations against ISIS have had success on the margins, along the Kurdish zone, Kirkuk, northern Nineveh. It has been clearing in Diyala, the Hamrin Mountains, and pushing up the Tigris River. Some localized tactical successes in Anbar Province.

But even when you achieve clearing and holding in these places, you are still going to have a residual, deep Sunni Arab resistance effort unless there is fundamental change in Baghdad. And I think we all understand that. We could be back to the days of 2006 with an ongoing industrial strength insurgency. And the way this fight has been moving forward in a bulldozer-like approach where you demolish a city like Jurf al-Sakhar, southwest of Baghdad, what has happened in Diyala and what appears to be happening in Tikrit—this does not bode well for Sunni and Shia relations at the grassroots level.

Prime Minister Abadi is not sectarian in my judgment, but he remains weak and isolated. The Iraqi security forces are weak and marginalized in this current construct. Shia militias are enhanced in their power and influence, and their loyalty is to the Supreme Leader Khamenei and their source of emulation Khamenei, not to Najaf, not to Karbala. The one exception in this case is the Sadr movement, and that is an area where there are some opportunities to reach out for an Iraqi Shia nationalist agenda within these militia elements. But we have a long and troubled history with the Sadr trend, but I think that is one area of some opportunity.

Tehran's sphere of influence, as I have said, is expanding and they have the advantages of proximity, deep knowledge of the players in the region, a vital strategic interest in achieving their objectives, and a ruthless and committed leadership that knows how to work in this environment. And those are all things that the United States fails to bring to the table and has not brought to the table in recent years.

The Sunni Arab community is likely weaker and more divided than ever in Iraq. Likewise, it is the same thing in Syria. Major population displacement is unlikely to be redressed with major Sunni communities moving back into these places like Sakhar or even in Diyala or eventually Tikrit because there seems to be an agenda underway of diminishing, if not cleansing major Sunni communities from around the Baghdad belts and the approaches into Baghdad in a way to create buffer zones. And this is something that has been done in the past, but they are just expanding the geographic reach. And General Chisori and others from the Qods Force has been orchestrating the same kind of effort around Damascus and in other regions of Syria. It is a plan that they have and we need to understand how they are approaching this.

Long term, if there is going to be successful reconciliation between these communities, there is going to have to be an address-

ing of the disenfranchisement and marginalization. That means some kind of local autonomy, a national guard, better resource distribution, and rebuilding and reinvestment in these Sunni Arab areas. Again, that is unlikely to occur under the political dynamics in Baghdad. And with the increasing influence of Iran and hard-line Shia, it even makes it less likely.

Lastly, over the last year or more, our engagement in Iraq has been insufficient to the task. We remain viewed as a peripheral player, hesitant and weak. Without sufficient military capabilities invested in this effort in ways that are aligned to achieve our political, economic, and diplomatic objectives, we are not going to be considered a major player. I am not sure we can change our approach at this point in time and develop a conceptual approach to our engagement in Iraq and execute it effectively to counter the gains made by Iran over the last 6 months for sure but how they have been building their enterprise there over the last several years.

We see a cementing of Shia militia relationships from Beirut to Syria to Iraq, and these are not just on the military side, but they are business, they are economic, partnering going on between members of the Maliki family, families in Beirut, the Assad family, and others. We could go into great detail if one wanted to approach how this cementing of relationships is being orchestrated by the Qods Force and MOIS.

With that, I will just stop, and I am looking forward to answering any of your questions.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you.

Dr. Rand?

STATEMENT OF DR. DAFNA H. RAND, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF STUDIES AND LEON E. PANETTA FELLOW, CENTER FOR A NEW AMERICAN SECURITY

Dr. RAND. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed, members of the committee. Thanks for inviting me to testify.

I ask that my longer written statement be submitted for the record.

Chairman MCCAIN. Without objection.

Dr. RAND. Great.

And shortly I just wanted to focus on the particular strategic principles that I believe should guide and inform and shape United States foreign policy toward the Middle East and North Africa over the near term.

And I applaud your instinct to hold the hearing on the greater question of U.S. Middle East foreign policy because we are all so involved in the day-to-day crises.

I would offer six strategic principles that I believe should inform our approach to the Middle East in the near and longer terms.

First, the United States should not shy away from publicly and privately articulating its interests and objectives. These have endured, surprisingly, despite the tumult in the region. They have not changed over time very much, and they include protecting the U.S. homeland and its personnel and interests abroad; countering radicalization, terrorism, and proliferation; and securing the free flow of natural resources, commerce, and other goods. The U.S.

seeks to protect its allies, including the State of Israel, and advance a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And all these goals support U.S. interests while advancing regional and international security. The United States also works with the governments and people of the region to address public demands for education, employment, governance, human rights, and just institutions.

The second principle is that the real and perceived U.S. presence in the region matters. Without it, the regional powers will try to manage and structure regional order, often working at cross purposes with each other and the United States. And the best example here is the United States efforts to stand up the coalition to combat ISIS in the past 6 months. Here this multilateral coalition of over 60 nations, I believe, has inserted a degree of management, regional architecture, and order to the post-Arab Spring environment. It has generated some preliminary positive outcomes. The practical results, of course, can be seen in some of the beginning signs of military degradation of ISIS, which is still preliminary but significant, as well as regional allies' efforts and interests in countering ISIS's financing, ideology, and recruitment efforts. These gains are very modest, but the fact that the Arab allies are working in sync with each other and with the United States and other countries is a positive development. For example, the Saudis have just invited the Iraqi prime minister to visit Riyadh, which is an unprecedented sign of diplomatic investment in the new Iraqi Government.

The third principle is that the United States must seize all diplomatic openings and create them as a first resort policy. In almost all cases, the alternative to diplomacy involves risk, security dilemmas, and greater instability. This is true with the current negotiations between the P5+1 in Iran. It is also true when it comes to the negotiated end to the Syrian civil war and for the pursuit of the final status agreement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is also true in Yemen and Libya I will add.

The fourth important principle is when the United States chooses to intervene militarily, judiciously, it must use force carefully. U.S. military interventions in the region have been most successful when they have involved local partners, when the use of coercion is carefully targeted to achieve a defined end state, and when the United States makes it clear that it has no intention of deploying ground troops semi-permanently in the region as the only day-after solution.

Fifth, the ideal end state for most of our efforts in the region involve building partner self-sufficiency, measured by the ability and the will of local leaders and their security forces to combat mutual threats, joint threats such as terrorism and proliferation. The training, equipping, and assisting of local partners must be done with an eye for shaping how these partners view their own strategy and military doctrine, including the threat perception that they hold. While building partnership capacity will necessarily focus on the measurable military capabilities, ensuring that all partner forces act professionally and in a manner consonant with the ultimate goal of inclusive governance are equally important objectives.

U.S. security assistance and training across the region must be designed in a manner that reflects these particular local challenges.

And finally, U.S. partners must subscribe to the view that it is borne of abundant recent evidence that in this particular region stability is borne of governance that is inclusive, multi-sectarian, and based on compromise and responsible leadership. And this is why Iran may share United States concerns about ISIS in Iraq, but ultimately is not an enduring partner in the strategic fight against the group in the region.

Thanks very much. I look forward to your questions on specific countries and cases where these principle apply.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Rand follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY DR. DAFNA H. RAND

Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed, and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify. Events are changing rapidly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), challenging the pursuit of United States interests and values. Often we are mired in the current crisis of the moment; this hearing offers an opportunity to consider overall U.S. policy objectives in this fluid region, and a strategy to achieve them.

ASSESSING REGIONAL DYNAMICS

Any discussion of current and future United States-Middle East policy must be founded on a realistic assessment of the regional drivers of change. The following four trends have emerged over the past decade and, while not exhaustive, they are directly shaping the context for how the United States pursues its policy objectives in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

First, while it is premature to conclude that the entire nation state system has failed across the region, the weakening of central government authority is observable in the monarchies, former presidential republics, one-party systems, and of course in the many states mired in civil conflict. There is a growing contestation of power in most MENA capitals, with elites and publics challenging the status quo. In some cases, such as in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya, we can visually see the state failure in the large swaths of ungoverned territory.

Elsewhere, evidence of state weakening and de-legitimation may have longer term manifestations. In Egypt, for example, despite the strong rule of a new strong man, the largest Arab country faces grave socio-economic problems and a population that will reach 100 million by 2025.¹ Egyptians are facing decreased opportunities for free expression, organization, and representation, portending poorly for future stability. Indeed, the current Egyptian government's approach to its political opposition and to domestic counter-terrorism could generate new types of terrorist threats, thus weakening the state over the medium term.

Second, as both a cause and a result of this state weakening, social mobilization by non-state actors is rising: individuals, citizen groups, tribes, regional blocs, and ethnic and sectarian parties are expressing themselves and their identities in an unprecedented way, demanding rights, cultural protection, economic opportunity, and justice. In some cases, the impact of social media is over-exaggerated, but it is true that the rapid increase in Twitter, Facebook, and other on-line social media use reflects a yearning for expression by many, particularly the approximately 50 percent of MENA citizens who are 25 years old or younger.² In some cases, social and tribal identities are replacing the institutional structures of the state—this is true in parts of Syria, Iraq, Libya, and elsewhere. In other cases, political parties and factions defined by ethnic and sectarian identities are demanding greater rights and, in some cases, autonomy.

Social mobilization can trigger non-violent protests, as we saw in 2011, but it also has the potential for violence. A third trend is a very real increase in radicalization

¹ Magued Osman, "Rapid Population Growth Imperils Egypt," *The Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, December 16, 2013, <http://www.aucegypt.edu/gapp/cairoreview/pages/articleDetails.aspx?aid=484>.

² This is a figure cited by the World Economic Forum, in Holly Ellyatt, "Youth Unemployment in Rich Middle East a 'Liability': WEF," *CNBC*, October 15, 2014, <http://www.cnbc.com/id/102088327>.

and terrorism. The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) is a terrifying organization: it holds territory; espouses an ideology that even al-Qaeda finds too violent; and is attracting over 20,000 foreign fighters from across the globe to fight in Syria and Iraq.³ The majority of these foreign fighters are coming from the Arab world.⁴ The appeal of this violent, cult-like ideology, which encourages attacks against minority groups, women, and children and reflects a distorted interpretation of Islam, is alarming. It is important to note that while ISIS poses a direct threat to the United States, and to its regional partners, radicalization and terrorism in MENA is not limited to Sunni jihadists. Indeed, Iranian-funded terrorism endures and also threatens United States interests and allies across the region.

Unfortunately, social mobilization and radicalization are part of the same phenomena, caused in part by inadequate governance and institutions, depressed economic opportunity and an absence of appropriate jobs, the fracturing of security infrastructures, and the appeal of radical jihadism as an alternative ideology and identity. These trends were emerging for many years before the Arab Spring; the protest movements of 2011 and the state responses to the revolutions has accelerated these phenomena.

Finally, a fourth trend involves the greater activism with which the region's powers have responded to the combination of state failure, revolution, and radicalism in the post-2011 era. Regional actors have tried to manipulate weak and broken states, materially supporting proxies in civil conflicts and influencing weak governmental actors and parties. Iran has long tried to influence the political system in Lebanon, and more recently has expanded its influence into Baghdad and Damascus. The weakening and failure of states across the region offers Tehran greater opportunities to involve itself operationally in local crises, reflected most directly in Iranian military support to the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

Other countries are using their economic wealth, and their ideological soft power, to try to influence the outcomes of the region's conflicts. For example, since 2011, Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia have all tried to support opposition fighters in the Syrian civil conflict. External patronage did not generate coherence, cooperation, and moderation among those fighting the Assad regime and its proxies. In some cases, when regional powers intervene, they are working at cross-purposes, because they often disagree on the role of Islam in political life as well as on how—and whether—to establish inclusive and pluralistic governance systems.

U.S. POLICY IN AN ERA OF REVOLUTION, RADICALIZATION, AND REGIME WEAKENING

In the face of these trends, and the likelihood that the current conditions of ideological and political competition and conflict will endure, U.S. strategy in the region need not be overly broad and all-encompassing. While the United States should not respond to the challenges in the region on a case-by-case approach—mainly because these conflicts are interconnected—it would be overly simplistic to impose a one-size-fits all grand strategy at this moment when the region's states are becoming more dissimilar in terms of trajectories of democratization, violence, terrorism, and economic conditions.

Instead, it makes sense to endorse a series of strategic principles for the United States to articulate publicly and privately. These principles should inform particular U.S. policy approaches to individual countries and conflicts. Although in some cases, the United States may have to deviate from these principles, it is preferable to have a working mission statement for the United States, a cogent explanation of what the United States is seeking and how it will pursue these objectives. The following strategic principles should guide U.S. policy in the near term:

Clearly state U.S. interests and values in the region

U.S. interests are unambiguous and have not changed significantly over time: The United States is protecting the American homeland and its personnel and interests abroad; is countering radicalization, terrorism, and proliferation; and is securing the free flow of natural resources, commerce, and other goods. The United States seeks to protect its allies, including the state of Israel, and to advance a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All of these goals support U.S. interests and enhance regional and international security.

³Nicholas J. Rasmussen, Director, National Counterterrorism Center, "Countering Violent Islamist Extremism: The Urgent Threat of Foreign Fighters and Homegrown Terror," Testimony to the Committee on Homeland Security, U.S. House of Representatives, February 11, 2015, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM00/20150211/102901/HHRG-114-HM00-Wstate-RasmussenN-20150211.pdf>.

⁴Richard Barrett "Foreign Fighters Fighting in Syria," The Soufan Group, June 2, 2014, <http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/TSG-Foreign-Fighters-in-Syria.pdf>.

The United States works with the governments and people of the region to address public demands for education, employment, governance, human rights, and just institutions. The United States promotes these ideals because they reflect American values. It has also learned that the pursuit of the above U.S. interests in this region is inextricably tied to—and sometimes depends on—the opportunities afforded to MENA's citizens.

Appropriately assess U.S. influence, leverage, and leadership

For decades, many people and governments in MENA have harbored unrealistic views about the scope of U.S. influence in the region, particularly U.S. policymakers' ability to shape regional events. These expectations, and the vision of an omnipotent United States masterminding events in the region, are unrealistic. Additionally, they do not reflect the American people's desire for cooperation and partnership, rather than for control in the MENA region.

It is equally unproductive, however, to underestimate the opportunities for U.S. influence and leverage over events and decision-making in the region. Despite the challenging environment and the rise of new state and non-state actors, the United States can creatively deploy its civilian and military toolkit to increase security, prosperity, and opportunity. U.S. diplomatic persuasion and its role as a leader of international coalitions can prod governments and their people to counter threats and to address basic human security concerns. In some cases, the United States can prod domestic economic and political reforms, particularly when this tough domestic work represents a collaboration between the United States, MENA governments, local civil society, and the MENA citizens who are advocating for change.

Recent events have shown that U.S. influence may be best achieved when the United States mobilizes regional and international coalitions, whether the goal is to fight terrorist groups such as ISIS, to impose multilateral sanctions against Iran, or to cooperate on threats such as cyber and maritime insecurity. In short, the people of the region should not overestimate the determinant nature of U.S. Middle East policy, even as policymakers in Washington should not underestimate U.S. influence in this part of the world.

Finally, real and perceived U.S. presence in the region matters. Without it, regional powers will try to manage and structure the regional order, often working at cross purposes with each other and the United States. Therefore, it is far preferable that the United States leads coalitions, such as the current international coalition against ISIS, to provide order, direction, and a shared strategic vision. Moreover, there is no substitute for the U.S. security guarantor. The people and states of the region will increasingly transact economic and even security business with other great powers, but will continue to look to the United States to provide regional order and leadership.

Align specific policy tools with the U.S. end goal

The United States must seize all diplomatic openings as a first resort, and create diplomatic opportunities where none exist. The United States has unrivaled bilateral diplomatic relations with many allies and partners in the region, as well as the ability to move other international actors to support regional goals, such as preventing Iranian nuclear proliferation, reaching a negotiated end to the Syrian civil war, or pushing for a final status agreement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The case for diplomacy is clear: in this region, alternatives to diplomacy almost always involve greater bloodshed.

When the United States chooses to intervene militarily, it must use force carefully. U.S. military interventions in the region have been most successful when they have involved local partners, when the use of coercion is carefully targeted to achieve a defined end state, and when the United States makes it clear that it has no intention of deploying ground troops semi-permanently in the region as a "day after" solution. As events in Iraq from 2003–2010 demonstrated, the indefinite, unending commitment of U.S. combat troops, deployed in the heart of the Arab world, can incite greater anti-American violence and redirect the nature of the fighting so that the United States becomes a party to the conflict.

Finally, the ideal end state for most military interventions in the region involves partner self-sufficiency, measured by the ability and will of local leaders and their security forces to combat mutual threats such as terrorism and proliferation. The training, equipping, and assisting of local partners must be done with an eye for shaping these partners' entire strategy and doctrine, including the state's threat perception. While building partnership capacity will necessarily focus on the measurable military capabilities, ensuring that all partner forces act professionally and in a manner consonant with the ultimate goal of inclusive and fair governance are equally important objectives. U.S. security assistance and training programs across

the region must be designed in a manner that reflects the particular, local challenges. These include the reasons why local partners may not have the will to fight or why partner security forces may be politicized or otherwise act unprofessionally.

Define partners and partnerships carefully

Partners in the Middle East, whether those currently fighting with us against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, members of the anti-ISIS Coalition, or other longstanding friends and allies share tactical and strategic security goals. Partners identify similar threats. As discussed above, however, building partnership capacity cannot exclusively focus on the technical abilities of regional security forces to fight and use American weapons. U.S. partners must subscribe to the view, born of an abundance of recent evidence, that in this region stability is born of governance that is inclusive, multi-sectarian, and based on compromise and responsible leadership. This is why Iran may share U.S. concerns about ISIS but cannot be an enduring partner in the strategic fight against the group in Iraq and Syria, given its record supporting sectarian political parties that do not espouse pluralistic and inclusive governance.

While these principles above are broad, they can guide U.S. policy responses to today's crises from Libya to Yemen. There are a few immediate implications of the above principles:

First, U.S. efforts since August 2014 to combat ISIS through the efforts of a multi-lateral Coalition have inserted a degree of management, regional architecture, and order to the post-Arab spring Middle East and North Africa that is generating many positive outcomes. The practical results of U.S. leadership is manifest in the work being conducted by the 60-member Coalition, states working in concert to not only militarily degrade ISIS but also to train moderate Syrian opposition forces and new units of the Iraqi security forces and to counter ISIS' financing, ideology, and recruitment efforts.

Investing U.S. "skin in the game" against ISIS is helping to move regional partners toward unprecedented support countering foreign fighters (i.e. Turkey), countering terrorist financing (i.e. Qatar), and bolstering the Iraqi government diplomatically and through assistance (i.e. Saudi Arabia). This Coalition alone is not a panacea for the problem of ISIS but it represents an effective mechanism that is yielding results on the battlefield and in terms of aligning strategic goals in regional capitals. The Coalition must be nurtured and supported.

Second, the United States must seize diplomatic opportunities, such as the current negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran. In almost all cases, the alternatives to diplomacy involve risk, security dilemmas, and greater instability. Opponents of diplomacy have not offered a persuasive near-term plan for preventing an Iranian nuclear weapon without risking potential violence and greater instability for the United States and its regional allies.⁵ Similarly, the pursuit of a negotiated end to the Syrian civil war and the negotiation of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict still offer the best pathways for long-term, enduring conflict resolution.

Third, the principles above also point to the right approach to countering Iran's network of shadowy militias, action forces, and terrorist groups that are contributing to destabilization in the region. Iran is not a partner in the work of rebuilding multi-sectarian, inclusive governing institutions. In some cases, coercive measures will be required to counter the Iranian action networks. In other cases in order, to prevent Iranian penetration and influence, other regional actors, with U.S. support will need to play a direct and leading diplomatic and security assistance role. In Yemen, for example, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states led by Saudi Arabia should be in the lead, providing security and countering terrorists who are stoking ethnic and sectarian bloodshed across the country. The United States must publicly and privately support GCC efforts.

CONCLUSION

In short, MENA states and societies are undergoing a decades-long process of transformation. This process will continue to be violent and non-linear. A U.S. presence and leadership role in the region is critical, to managing and containing crises and preventing regional competition and disorder. In most cases, diplomatic interventions should be a first resort of U.S. policy, but other U.S. tools, when deployed carefully and with clear end goals, can help to achieve key U.S. interests.

⁵Daryl G. Kimball, Issue Brief, Arms Control Today, Vol. 7., Issue 5, March 5, 2015, <http://www.armscontrol.org/Issue-Briefs/2015-03-03/Netanyahu-On-the-Iran-Nuclear-Issue-A-Reality-Check>.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you, Dr. Rand. And I thank the witnesses for their important contributions.

I know the witnesses are aware that General Petraeus made a statement in the last few days where he basically stated that he believed that Iran was a greater threat long-term in the Middle East than ISIS is. Just maybe beginning with you, Dr. Takeyh, maybe if you, all the witnesses, respond to General Petraeus' statement.

Dr. TAKEYH. Well, I think they are different threats. One is also this kind of annihilistic terrorist group that, as was mentioned, is borne out of Sunni community's grievances. The other is a nation state that has command of nation state resources, its economy. It has military and all that. So in the long term, I think that is probably a greater threat to the stability of the region. When you have a nation state married to a revisionist ideology enhancing its military capabilities, that will loom over the region for some time to come.

Chairman MCCAIN. Dr. Pollack?

Dr. POLLACK. Senator, I agree with that statement. I would strongly agree with Dr. Takeyh's characterization of it. Al Qaeda, ISIS is a terrorist group. It represents an extreme element of the Sunni community, one that they may broadly sympathize with but they do not necessarily want to represent them, let alone to rule over them. Its staying power in the region is going to be limited and we have seen it experience difficulties. That is not to suggest that it is not a very serious threat that needs to be dealt with. It does. But exactly as Dr. Takeyh has pointed out—and I think this was also the point that Colonel Harvey was making earlier—at the end of the day, Iran is a major power in the region. It has the capacity to dominate the region and has done so for centuries in the past. Ultimately that is a greater threat to the United States because it demonstrates a greater ability to control the region and to sustain that control over time, if allowed to do so.

Chairman MCCAIN. Colonel Harvey?

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, there are no indications that Iran's malign intent in the region vis-a-vis its neighbors has shifted. Any beliefs that Iran's agenda in the region is going to change based upon reformists taking power as a result of the nuclear agreement down the road are probably the same kinds of people that would think that a Libertarian candidate in the United States could win a presidential election in the next 10 years. It is not going to happen. The few signs of political reformists advancing within the government from academia, from economic arena, elsewhere are minor. The hardliners are well entrenched, and the system is aligned to keep them that way. We see Khamenei posters popping up throughout Iraq. We see them posting on their webs in these Shia militias that they are going to liberate Shia in Kuwait, in Bahrain, and in the eastern provinces. Intent plus capability equals threat. Our long-term threat, the current threat is still Iran until we see real signs of change.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Dr. Rand?

Dr. RAND. The sources of each threat is different. I would just highlight something my colleagues have not mentioned, which is

that ISIS has reinterpreted and distorted even al-Qaeda's fatwas about killing civilians, you know, giving a free reign to its folks to kill women and civilians and minorities. There is something new and different and terrifying about ISIS that cannot be overestimated. That is that the source of the Iranian threat is real and true and has been explained here. I see their vision of a winner-take-all governance system as deeply terrifying to our goals and our objectives in the region.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you.

Colonel Harvey, you were heavily involved in the surge and other activities in Iraq. We now see pictures and publicity coverage by the Iranians and others of Soleimani in orchestrating and leading the attack on Tikrit. Is this not the same guy that sent the copper-tipped IED's into Iraq which killed hundreds of American soldiers and marines? And should we not be more aware of the malign influence of Soleimani through the last—I believe he has been in power for 21 years. And would the average Iraqi not believe that it is the Iranians that are now coming to the rescue of the Iraqis against ISIS and not the United States of America who seems to be observing the activities around Tikrit?

And finally, does the difficulty that they are now experiencing in retaking Tikrit not indicate the magnitude of the challenge that they face in attempting to retake Mosul?

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, Soleimani and the Iranian Guard corps commander Jafari and others have been deeply involved in Iraq for the last 6 or 7 months. And for the Shia community and even in the Kurdish region, they see that the Iranians have become major players and they are contributing on the ground. And the publicity and the information campaigns have been really effective in my judgment, and Soleimani has taken a front-line role in showcasing Iranian presence.

He is in fact the one that orchestrated the campaign against the United States. Iran focused on creating disorder and undermining our efforts there—and they are probably one of the key reasons that we had such difficulty—and undermined domestic U.S. will in that regard. But he has also been deeply behind the efforts in Syria and of course in Lebanon. Very brutal approaches in orchestrating and conceiving of sectarian cleansing, barrel bombs, and that type of thing attacking the types of targets and focusing on not going after elements like al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra, and ISIS in order to create this picture of either Assad or the extremists, very Machiavellian in their approach.

At the end of the day, Khamenei's access and presence and his underlings in the command centers in the 6th infantry division, in the 8th infantry division with commandos provides them reach and, I think, influence that is going to be far-lasting. And we just do not have that type of presence or capability on the ground. They know how to play in this terrain. We have not.

Chairman MCCAIN. Dr. Rand, maybe we could ask—Dr. Rand, do you—

Dr. RAND. It is an interesting question about whether there are any lessons learned from the Tikrit offensive that could be applied by the ISF towards the potential battle in Mosul. This is, I think, what everyone is watching in the media right now. A lot I think

will hinge on how the people of Tikrit feel liberated, quote/unquote, by these popular mobilization forces. There were mixed reports in the media about the response by the individual civilians and citizens in Tikrit to the so-called liberators.

I think the ISF and, of course, the units that we are training there have learned about this long-term versus short-term tradeoff in terms of you might have a short term free of ISIS, but there could be long-term human rights abuses and other grievances that accrue when you are ruled by groups like the popular mobilization units.

Dr. POLLACK. Senator, if I could add to this. First of all, I think this is a critical issue. I think that what we are seeing now is very dangerous. I will just simply add to Dr. Rand's point by noting that even if we see short-term success—and the Iranians are smart about this and the Iraqi allies are smart about this—they are trying hard to win hearts and minds. But if there is not beyond that a process of reconciliation between Iraqi Sunni and Shia, over the long term this is going to break down and lead to renewed violence.

In addition, I think the last part of your question gets at a very important issue, which is that while Iran's influence in Iraq is now deep and wide—in fact, I would say that it is greater in Iraq than at any time since the rise of the Ottoman Empire. I do not think that that is an exaggeration—it is not permanent necessarily. And there are Iraqi allies that we might help to push back on them. And the best we have is Haider Abadi. From my conversation with him and from other Iraqis, I am convinced that Prime Minister Abadi does not like the Iranian presence, would like to see it limited, would like to push back on it, but he needs our help. He will be coming to the United States in the middle of next month, and this provides a terrific, a critical opportunity for the U.S. Government to enable him and empower him to be able to push back on the Iranians. But he needs resources. He needs the support of the United States. He is going to need additional American military and civilian assistance, not necessarily because he has a specific need for anything, but because he needs to demonstrate to his own people and to his rival political leaders that he has the full support of the United States, that the United States is providing resources just as Iran does, and to give him the ability to push back on what the Iranians are doing and demonstrate that there is a way to work with the United States and people do not need to simply work with the Iranians.

You are absolutely right, Senator. Going around Baghdad with signs, as Derek Harvey was pointing out, all proclaim Iraq's thanks to Iran for saving them from the ISIS threat. And when you speak to Iraqi leaders, across the board they all believe that it was Iran who saved them in the summer of 2014, not the United States. We have got to reverse that narrative.

Dr. TAKEYH. I agree with Ken in suggesting that the Iranian influence may be substantial but not enduring. The Iranian model of operation in Iraq is, to some extent, drawn from their experiences in Lebanon in the 1980's where they sort of amalgamated the Shia political community into a single political party and developed a lethal Hezbollah proxy force. That is sort of their model in Iraq. Although I think the Shia community in Iraq differs from that of Leb-

anon. It has its own sources of emulation. It has its own religious authority. It has its own religious hierarchy, and I think it will be prone to resist the surge of the Iranian influence in that country for all the reasons that Ken suggested and particularly during the time of Maliki, 2007–2009, where there was Iraqi leadership that put Iraqi nationalism above sectarian identities.

What I fear is as Iranians are training these Shia militias, they are training them today for domestic contests in Iraq. Are they going to try to use them as they use Hezbollah for transnational purposes, try to deploy them in other places? At this point, I do not think they can because there is so much work to be done in Iraq, but as the ISIS threat diminishes, I think you may see them having plans for those particular militias to operate in Syria and operate beyond the boundaries of Iraq. And that is something that we should be quite concerned about because it is the birth of multiple Hezbollah.

Chairman MCCAIN. I thank the witnesses.

Senator REED. Dr. Takeyh, you made an allusion in your discussion to our ops negotiations during the Cold War with the Soviets, and you suggested that there were some collateral benefits too. But my sense—and I will ask you—is that those negotiations were most specifically focused at reducing nuclear threats. In the context of Iran, regardless of whether there are any collateral benefits, do you believe it would be useful to reach an agreement with the Iranians that can be verifiable that would at least check their present nuclear ambitions?

Dr. TAKEYH. I think, as was suggested I think by Dr. Rand, the most viable solution to an Iranian nuclear challenge is a negotiated one. But it has to be an agreement that has the right technological attributes, not just limited to verification procedures.

The dirty little secret about arms control, Senator Reed, is that infractions of arms control agreements are difficult to prosecute. So you can have a verification regime, but it is very difficult to prosecute infractions from the first arms control negotiated, the Test Ban Treaty by Kennedy, through all the SALT and START agreements to all the framework agreements. So we have to be concerned about the components of this particular agreement. And I would say there are some indications that this is technologically permissive. It excludes some key issues from being considered, and therefore, not any deal is superior to no deal.

Senator REED. No. I think that is a concept that we all embrace. We have to look very carefully at the agreement. But the issue is if we can get an agreement, which is verifiable, which has all the technological issues, that is important in and of itself even if it does not immediately reflect a new Iran with new openings to the West and less enthusiasm about their expansive hegemonic—I am mispronouncing it, but you get it—is that fair?

Dr. TAKEYH. I think historically we have looked at arms control agreement as precursors to better relationships. That is the Americans. Our adversaries have not. The Soviets saw no particular contradiction about signing SALT II and invading Afghanistan.

Senator REED. But nevertheless, we entered these agreements. And I think looking back, it materially increased our security.

Dr. TAKEYH. I think a good agreement can enhance our security. A deficient agreement can substantially detract from it.

Senator REED. I understand.

Any other comments on this, Dr. Pollack?

Dr. POLLACK. Absolutely, Senator. I think the point that you are making is a very important one because as we assess whatever agreement we may get with the Iranians—and I also have my concerns about some of the rumors swirling around about specifics of it. But nevertheless, we have to assess it based on the real alternatives. If we do not get an agreement with the Iranians, is it likely that we will be able to force them back to the table and get a better one at some later point? I remain very skeptical of that. And I think under those circumstances, the most likely alternatives will either be military action against Iran, which I am on record and I will say again I think would be a mistake, a mistake by us and a mistake by the Israelis. I do not think it will solve the problem. I think it will greatly exacerbate the problem.

The alternative is that the Iranian nuclear program is unconstrained, and under those circumstances, I suspect that at some point the Iranians will acquire a nuclear weapon. And if that is the case, I think that we will look back and say the opportunity that we missed was one that we should not have missed.

Senator REED. Quickly, any other comments, because I do have one other line—

Mr. HARVEY. I think that they are headed to a nuclear weapon with the deal or without the deal. That is just my judgment from everything I have been looking at with this regime unless there is fundamental change in the regime. I am concerned about their long-range missile program, their long-range cruise missiles of about 3,000 miles, and their continued efforts to weaponize warheads. There is only one purpose for these types of long-range weapons and that is to marry them with a nuclear warhead.

Senator REED. Dr. Rand, any comments?

Dr. RAND. I already said on the record that I believe negotiations are the best alternative here.

I would just add that resuming multilateral sanctions is going to be very, very difficult in the future, and evidence of the previous sanctions regime has shown the importance of multilateral sanctions with bilateral U.S. sanctions to really maximize the coercion.

Senator REED. Let me just turn quickly because all of you, both in the comments about Syria and Iraq, have suggested this is really a political problem. The kinetics, the military operations are critically important to buy time, but we have to have—and again, this seems *deja vu*, *deja vu*. We have to resolve internal conflicts in Iraq between Sunni, Shia, and Kurds. We have to resolve the issue in Syria in terms of a minority Alawite government and a huge majority Sunni population.

And it begs the question. You know, let us assume that we are able to dispose of Assad, get him out, we are able to defeat the ISIS threat. The costs, the investment that we are going to have to make in both those countries I would assume would be staggering. So the good news, if we win—and I think this is a question we did not pursue vigorously enough before we went into Iraq—is what will be the costs in terms of not just resources but commitment of

personnel on the ground, capacity building of governments. I mean, I was, like Colonel Harvey, recently in Iraq and Afghanistan. The capacity of ministries to operate is very limited.

So just quickly, we are talking about if we are pursuing this sort of strategy—it is not the quick win, take out these militaries, stick somebody in the government. We are talking about a multi-trillion dollar enterprise over many years. Is that fair?

Dr. TAKEYH. I think, as again Ken suggested, it will take a long time to reconstitute these nation states. I think Iraq, as bad as it is, is easier than Syria. And I think success of Iraq will contribute to success in Syria. Iraq does have ingredients of being able to reconstitute itself as a unitary state in command of its territory. I think Syria, for all practical purposes, will be very difficult to reconstitute Syria as a nation state with the sort of a central authority that has all the attributes of a national authority that we can think of, protecting its borders, ensuring law and order, commerce, and all that. So Syria is a much substantial challenge than Iraq is. But I think Iraq can contribute to success in Syria.

Senator REED. And just before the others comment, let me inject something else. This would not be a one-dimensional approach by the Department of Defense in terms of—this is State Department, AID, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Justice building judicial systems so that if sequestration went into effect, our ability financially to carry out this grand strategy would be basically mooted.

Dr. TAKEYH. Substantial costs, yes.

Senator REED. Dr. Pollack?

Dr. POLLACK. Senator, I want to be careful here. As you will remember, I famously went on record saying that I could not imagine that the invasion of Iraq in 2003 would wind up costing us trillions of dollars. That is because I also could not imagine that the Bush administration was going to make the parade of mistakes that they made in Iraq, which wound up costing us trillions of dollars.

That said, I am very skeptical of the idea that Iraq and Syria will again cost us trillions of dollars. On this, I do disagree with you. It is because I think the experience of Iraq has illustrated that a great deal of what we did in Iraq was probably unnecessary. First, again, so much of what was about combat operations that were largely about cleaning up the mess that we made starting in 2003. If you think about how things might have gone differently if we had done the right thing—that is, what we did in 2007. If we had done it in 2003, those costs would have been dramatically reduced.

In addition, a lot of what we did on the civilian side was not quite germane to the ultimate solution of the problem. I want to be careful there. It did buy us Iraq's goodwill after having made so many mistakes, but at the end of the day, fixing sanitation in Ramadi was not critical to stabilizing the country. What was critical to stabilizing the country—and incidentally, the historical record of other civil wars makes this clear—was, again, securing the population, forging a new power sharing arrangement among the warring factions and ensuring that there was some entity that can create trust over the long term. That is what we need to be going for in Syria. That is what we need to be going for in Iraq.

As Dr. Takeyh has pointed out, as I have said as well, Iraq is going to be somewhat easier than Syria because we have got some basis to do that in Iraq. But nevertheless, this is mostly about the difficulty of creating those processes, none of which ought to be that expensive. The big expensive piece for us will be the military piece, which is absolutely necessary in both Iraq and Syria, and some degree of civilian assistance again, as I said, mostly to empower the kinds of actors that we want to help. But the lesson we should learn from Iraq is that a lot of the money that we wound up spending on Iraqi civilian programs really was not a key contributor to what actually created stability there in 2007 to 2009.

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, I think I would like to point out one thing, and that is in the Gulf, in Jordan and Morocco where we did not see the Arab Spring, we have fairly authoritarian monarchial governments that are perceived for the most part to be legitimate by their populations. I would be very careful about what we are seeking in Syria as far as interim steps towards some sort of political solution there.

What we need is capable, possibly authoritarian transitional, technical approaches there, bottom-up approaches to build the community of interests at the provincial level. Top down is a problem, and we have to make sure that we align it to the political-cultural dynamic of Syria, and that is going to take some hard looking at the demographics and what makes sense politically, tribally, et cetera because there are a lot of bridges that we could take advantage of once we got to the point where we are actually talking about what would it look like.

I think we can diffuse costs regionally and internationally because there is interest. Iraq is very much a different story because they have got tremendous wealth. Syria does not have that kind of wealth.

And I am doubtful when you look at intervention—and I teach a class on intervention—I think we do have to be humble about what it is that we can do. Our leadership is absolutely critical in shaping it, but at the end of the day, our ability to bring the inter-agency together in a whole-of-government approach, to have everything prioritized and to have the executive committing political capital to achieve something and explain it to the American public, I have doubts about our ability to do those things in order to achieve something on the ground there.

Senator REED. Dr. Rand, quickly please.

Dr. RAND. I would just add one quick additional point, which is the role of allies in the reconstruction or the future of Syria and Iraq. As I mentioned, this coalition has preliminarily had some success in moving these countries to work in sync. And as we know, before this coalition, for many years in the Syrian conflict, a lot of the Gulf countries were funding opposition forces out of their own bank accounts. So it is far better to have a unified, coherent strategy in Syria, and there are resources but they just have to be moved through a coalition and through leadership. And I believe the United States can leverage its leadership role to gain allied support for both countries.

Senator REED. Thank you very much.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Takeyh and Dr. Pollack, you heard in Senator McCain's opening statement the quote by David Petraeus. Do you generally agree with General Petraeus in that statement?

Dr. TAKEYH. Yes.

Dr. POLLACK. Yes.

Mr. HARVEY. Yes, Senator.

Chairman MCCAIN. Do you generally agree, Dr. Rand?

Dr. RAND. As I said, I think there are different sources of the threats.

Senator INHOFE. Not much has been said about the negotiations that are taking place right now, and I will get back to that in a minute after asking this initial question. But when we had what I thought was really a great speech that Netanyahu made when he was over here and was talking about the negotiations, what are your feelings about his—how close to target was he on the negotiations specifically when he had made the joint speech to our House and the Senate?

Dr. TAKEYH. I think actually if you look at the content of the speech, the prime minister moved from his previous positions of total dismantlement of the Iranian nuclear program in a pragmatic way. He is often accused of being a maximalist and so on. He actually adjusted his own previous prohibitions in order to come closer to what the 5 Plus 1 are negotiating. And he established some benchmarks, namely the scope of the Iranian nuclear program should be conditioned on its behavior in the region, terrorism, and so on. I do not think that is what is happening in the negotiations. They are maintaining them pretty much on the nuclear issue. So in that sense, his attempt to link Iran's nuclear ambitions to its regional ambitions is not something that is being upheld by the 5 Plus 1 in their negotiations. It may be sensible, but it is not happening.

Senator INHOFE. Dr. Pollack, I am just talking about his statement to the joint session, not since the election and some of the things that are perhaps a little bit different. What do you think about his analysis at that time?

Dr. POLLACK. I think the prime minister exaggerated a number of different points, and while again I think there is truth in logic in them, we also need to be asking the question what is practical. As Dr. Takeyh just pointed out, I think that the idea of linking the nuclear deal to Iranian behavior elsewhere is problematic. And here I would suggest that I think that both critics on the left and right are making too much of the deal.

I actually would suggest that we need to think about the deal exactly the way the Iranians are. The Iranians are portraying this deal as a simple transaction, limits on their nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief. And I think they have made it very clear they are not interested in anything beyond that. Certainly the Supreme Leader is not. I am sure that Foreign Minister Zarif would love a rapprochement, but I do not think that that is in the offing because of the remarks of the Supreme Leader.

I think that we need to do the same. I think that we need to recognize that there is utility, exactly as Senator Reed's questions raised, in having a deal that will provide some degree of limits on Iran's nuclear ambitions. I will not disagree with Colonel Harvey

that I think the Iranians would like at some point to have a nuclear weapon, but I think that they have made the decision that they do not need an actual weapon at this point in time. And what I am looking for is a deal that reinforces that inhibition for as long as possible. If that is the case, I think that that does remove a very important element of the problems in the Middle East including those faced by Israel. But we should not assume that our problems with Iran go away once the nuclear deal is signed, and I think it a mistake for us to be calibrating our responses elsewhere in the region under the assumption that we are going to have a kinder, gentler Iran after a nuclear deal.

Senator INHOFE. Yes. Before this hearing, I mentioned to you I was going to ask the question about the prediction that was made back in 2007 that by 2015 that Iran would have a weapon and a delivery system. Here it is 2015. And now you are saying you are not convinced that they ultimately want the weapon. Is this what you are saying?

Dr. POLLACK. No. What I am saying is I think they do ultimately want the weapon. I think that they have decided in the short-term not to get it immediately because we have created very important disincentives for them to do so.

Senator INHOFE. Do you think our intelligence back in 2007 was accurate?

Dr. POLLACK. I do not think that it was wrong. As an old intel analyst, I have seen this movie any number of times, Senator. I can remember predictions about when Iraq would get a nuclear weapon, and they keep moving and they keep moving. And we need to assume that the Iranians have some kind of a program behind the scenes that has probably been making progress.

Senator INHOFE. Well, the same with North Korea and others. We are always making these predictions.

Dr. Takeyh, what do you think about what they said back in 2007 and their intentions, and how close are they today?

Dr. TAKEYH. The intentions of the Iranians to have—

Senator INHOFE. By 2015, they would have a weapon and a delivery system.

Dr. TAKEYH. I think to some extent, the fact that that objective was not that—the timeline was not met is a testimony to success of export control, sabotage, and sanctions, and what the international community has managed to do in terms of imposing costs on the Iranian calculation.

The Islamic Republic deals more in nuclear weapons. To 2 weeks ago, their former negotiator, who is the current representative of the Supreme Leader to the Supreme National Security Council, Saeed Habibi, said in an interview in a talk at the university that Americans have all these weapons and they are objecting to the fact that we want to get enough material for one bomb. That was 2 weeks ago. He is not a former official. He is the current representative of the Supreme Leader to the Supreme National Security Council that makes all the decisions regarding nuclear strategy, as well as domestic issues.

No, the question is not intentions. The question is can the international community provide obstacles to their intentions. And a deal can impose restraints, but it can also serve as a pathway.

There are problems in terms of a sunset clause, upon expiration of which Iran can have an industrial-sized nuclear program, similar to Japan and the Netherlands. That is a dash to a bomb. There is a problem about the kind of technologies that they will have as a residual program. There are problems in terms of other aspects of this deal. So a deal can be both a restraint that delays the program, but also a pathway that makes the march toward that weapon more legal, legitimate, and therefore effective. So it is illegal and dangerous, legal and longer.

Senator INHOFE. Well, I am running out of time here, and I wanted to get to what is happening right now in Yemen because it has been a strategy that the President has talked about for a long time. We do airpower. Then we let the other guys get on the ground. In fact, this is a direct quote. He said, this strategy of taking out terrorists who threaten us, while supporting partners on the front lines, is one that we have successfully pursued in Yemen. Any comments on Yemen?

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, I think one of the issues we have had is focusing almost exclusively on a counterterrorism approach in, say, the horn of Africa and in Yemen and not looking at some of the wider opportunities, more opportunities we have to engage and build up security forces and partnerships in a way to solidify governments and address some of the other issues that we could have earlier.

I think right now the problem in Yemen for us is where are they headed. It is a large population, about 30 million. It is radicalized. You have got the Islamic State, al-Qaeda, Houthis backed by Shia there. It is not really a strategic threat to us from the Bab-el-Mandeb straits, but from a Saudi perspective in the Gulf, it is very, very concerning because of the radicalization and the terrorism that can emanate from there.

Senator INHOFE. Yes. Mr. Chairman, I am going to get some questions for the record, so I assume you are going to leave that open because I think it is significant. We have all this talent here. We need to extract as much as we can. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. I would like to ask Dr. Rand if she has additional response to Senator Inhofe's question.

Dr. RAND. I think it is an excellent question and it is alarming what has happened in the past 2 months. The long-term solution or the short-term solution really is a combination of counterterrorism and political strategy that involves governance and negotiations. And the National dialogue was occurring between 2012 and 2014 in Yemen and had international buy-in and had neighbor buy-in. The challenge for the U.S. is really the risk assessment of placing diplomats and other civilians on the ground to work this process. The same reason why the U.S. security asking for the embassy to withdraw—other Western embassies have withdrawn because of security conditions. So it is a dilemma. The solution is a political, civilian assistance mission, but the tactics to get there requires a risk and that is the calculation the U.S. Government has to make.

Chairman MCCAIN. Dr. Pollack?

Dr. POLLACK. I just wanted to add. Thank you, Senator.

First, Senator, when I heard the President make that statement, I absolutely cringed. It is the worst way that we can handle these situations. And as I said, to think that you can simply fight ter-

rorism by killing terrorists is an absolute mistake, and I would hope that we would have learned that after 14 or 40 years of trying exactly that approach and failing so miserably.

In the case of Yemen, I think that there were other alternatives available in the past, but now we need to accept the fact Yemen is in civil war. It is not slipping into civil war. It is not on the brink of civil war. This is civil war. This what it looks like.

And to go back to my conversation with Senator Reed just a minute ago, solving civil wars is not impossible, but it is not easy. It is not simple. It is not fast, and it can be very expensive. And while I think that the American interests in Iraq and by extension Syria are significant enough to merit that kind of an effort there, as President Obama has signed us up for, I think rightly so, I am hard-pressed to imagine that we are going to make a similar effort in Yemen, which does not engage our interests the way that Iraq and Syria do, especially when we are making exactly that kind of an effort in Iraq and Syria.

So I think we are going to have to rethink Yemen entirely, and to simply say that we need to come up with better governance or we need to provide for negotiations, this is not going to work. The history of civil wars makes it very clear it is not going to work.

And I will simply say two things about Yemen. One, we are going to have to contain the Yemeni civil war as best we can, despite the fact that the historical evidence demonstrates that it is exceptionally difficult to contain the spillover of civil wars. And second, one of the most important things that I would argue we need to do is to keep our allies, the Saudis, out. The Saudis have an obsession with Yemen and with the notion that Yemeni internal instability will affect their own. It has not despite the fact that Yemen has been unstable for 50 years. But the Saudis cannot help themselves, and I think one of the greatest dangers is a Saudi Arabia that is itself facing a number of internal challenges will overstretch its resources by getting deeply involved in a Yemeni quagmire.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Donnelly, the Saudis look at the map and look at where Yemen is situated. I share their concerns.

Senator Donnelly?

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In regards to Iraq, we are trying to push ISIS back and trying to enlist the help of the Sunni moderates. How do the Sunni moderates help when it is primarily Iranian Shiite militias? And so you are asking them to fight other Sunnis and stand with Shiite militias that have attacked their own families over the years.

Dr. POLLACK. If I can begin, Senator, I think this is the critical question facing Iraq and our efforts there. It is why we need to recognize that the key obstacle to be overcome is forging a new power sharing arrangement between Sunni and Shia. And unfortunately, what I consistently hear from senior U.S. Government officials is the sense that this is somehow an academic exercise that can follow the successful conclusion of the fighting. It cannot. It is a necessary precondition.

If Sunnis do not know what a future Iraq is going to look like, if they do not know what the Iraq they are fighting for is going to—how it is going to treat them, if they do not know what role they are going to play, what guarantees, what rights they are going to

have in it, they are not going to be willing to fight for that Iraq against what they see as a Shia-dominated government that has in the past oppressed them. We can make short-term gains. They might be able to retake Tikrit. They may even be able to take Mosul. The danger is that in doing so without that umbrella power sharing arrangement that will make all Sunnis comfortable that the future Iraq is one that they want to be part of, they will go back to resistance. And at some point, they will probably go back to ISIS or al-Qaeda or some other vicious Sunni group which they do not particularly like, but they see as a critical ally in a fight against a vicious Sunni government.

That is how ISIS came back in in 2013 because they saw Nouri al-Maliki rip up the hard-won power sharing arrangement that we forged in 2008–2009. If we do not have that this time around, all of the military gains are likely to prove ephemeral, and they are likely to feed a worse civil war in Iraq in the future rather than ending the current one.

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, the Sunni leadership is fractured. If you look for legitimate leaders, they are at the provincial and sub-provincial level. In Baghdad, you have real challenges with Sunni coherence and engagement and representation and engagement despite the MOD being a Sunni, for example.

Senator DONNELLY. Well, it seems to me, to put it in more basic terms for right here, it is like, okay, these are my really bad cousins, and I do not like them at all. But you are asking for me to join the people I really do not like who live in the next town over to go and fight my own cousins. My job is to clean up my cousins. It is not their job to come in and clean them up.

So until we figure out the Sunni moderate piece, does it not make it extraordinarily difficult to have success? And here we are hoping to move out ISIS, and in return, we are looking at Soleimani with Shiite militias. And you go, how is that a better choice?

Mr. HARVEY. Senator, for the last year we have known, for the most part, who the moderate Sunni Arab provincial and sub-tribal leaders are in these provinces.

Senator DONNELLY. Right.

Mr. HARVEY. We have not been able to deliver. We do not have a presence. There is no honest broker on the ground that can help build those bridges in an effective way. There has been empty promise after empty promise from the prime minister's office and others from MOD that they are going to provide weapons and arms and munitions effectively to the different tribes that have taken up the fight against ISIS, and it has not been forthcoming in any significant way.

Senator DONNELLY. Let me ask you this. Abadi may be trying, but is he not still surrounded by so many of Maliki's people and those are the ones who are still pulling the strings on decision after decision?

Dr. POLLACK. I might put it slightly differently, Senator. I do not think you are wrong about that, but I just might phrase it differently, which is that he does not have his own people. This is one of the biggest problems. When you meet with Prime Minister Abadi and the people around him, he has got one or two guys—and I am

not exaggerating—one or two guys who he relies on for almost everything. And then those people have——

Senator DONNELLY. Let me ask you this. What would you recommend we do there at this point?

Dr. POLLACK. First point. I think that Derek is absolutely right about the fragmentation of the Sunni community, but I do not think that that is something that either Abadi or the Sunnis can overcome themselves. We are going to have to do it. This is actually what we did in 2008 where then-Ambassador Crocker became the Sunni surrogate in the conversations with the Shia. I think the same thing needs to happen this time.

Second point——

Senator DONNELLY. Do you think that the Iranian nuclear discussions are hanging us up in Iraq?

Dr. POLLACK. I think unfortunately they are, and I do not think they should. That was my response——

Senator DONNELLY. I am sorry.

Dr. POLLACK.—to Senator Inhofe's question before. I think that we need to regard this as a transactional thing, and we need to set that aside as——

Senator DONNELLY. One is here. One is here. You do each deal——

Dr. POLLACK. Correct, because that is how the Iranians treat it. And the Iraqis could not care less about what deal we sign with the Iranians. They want to know what the heck we are going to do in Iraq and why are we not doing more to help them, to help the Iraqis who would like to push Iran back and move in the direction we would like them to.

Point number two is we need to be in a position to empower people like Prime Minister Abadi, both helping him create the infrastructure to manage the Iraqi Government, but also giving him the resources to take action and to demonstrate to other Iraqis, who quite frankly are mostly on the fence, that there is a reason for coming with him and the American side and not simply——

Senator DONNELLY. I am out of time. But I just want to ask you real quick. How do you empower the Sunni moderates at this point and give them the space to do something?

Mr. HARVEY. I think part of the solution is you have to have enough U.S. force presence, credibility, and leadership on the ground with a sense that the U.S. will be committed to be there over the longer haul. It requires not only a CT presence, but it requires some attack aviation, logistics aviation, force protection so that we can actually move around the battle space and do the engagement and help build these political bridges and do the same things we did between the Baghdad government and these leaders in these provinces in the past. And you have to have a certain amount of presence on the ground to do that. We do not have that presence.

We also need to bring in people that have the experience and the ongoing relationships with these people. There are many that have those relationships, but they need to be identified and selected and brought in to help with this effort.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Sessions?

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

Colonel Harvey, I think you just gave the only real answer, solution in Iraq that we have heard. We have got a lot of problems, but that is the solution I think.

Dr. Pollack, you said problems the long in making will be long in solving. Just briefly, would you say with the spasm of extremism and violence and sectarianism in the Middle East that we have to have a long-term policy—I mean 30, 50, 60 years—to try to be a positive force in bringing some stability to that region? History tells us those spates of violence tend to cool off, but often decades in cooling off.

Dr. POLLACK. Yes.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

You said I believe also that the word is getting out that Iran saved Iraq. I have a vivid memory of the ambassador to the United States from Iraq being pounded by a juvenile CNN reporter about why he was taking assistance from Iran. He said we want assistance from the United States. This is who we have stood with for a long time. We want to be with them, but we face an existential threat, and we will have to take the assistance wherever we get it.

And Senator McCain warned in 2011—I do not want to be blamed again, but we made a lot of mistakes before 2011. We made some after 2011. And I really, really, really believe going to virtually zero presence in Iraq was a colossal disaster. Go back and read Senator McCain's warnings about what would happen if we did that, and it has happened exactly like he said to the great tragedy.

Now, Colonel Harvey, General Stewart, the Defense Intelligence officer who was there during the Awakening in Fallujah and that area, acknowledged in this committee that if we embedded with the Iraqi forces instead of allowing the Iranians to be embedded with them, they fight better. They have more confidence, that they feel like the operations are better planned, that they have air support and smart weaponry that can help them if they get in trouble. Do you think even a small number of special forces embedded with the Iraqi military forces, if we had done that, as they had to, on Tikrit could have made a positive difference?

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, I do think it could make a substantial difference. One of my concerns right now, though, is that we are training a lot of Shia militia that are being integrated into some of the training programs separate and apart from the training that is going on for Pesh and the Sunnis out in Anbar at Al Asad. And I think that is a concern for me.

The presence of the U.S. at headquarters at the division and lower would be much appreciated. I know that there is real frustration by Iraqi commanders that they have Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq or you have got Badr Corps or you have got Kata'ib Hezbollah, Shia militia members coordinating their operations in their headquarters. And a U.S. counterbalance to that would be very welcomed. It would improve their efficiency, their capability, their confidence.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, General Petraeus said I think at the same part of the remarks that Senator McCain quoted—said, “as for the United States’ role, could all of this have been averted if

we had kept 10,000 troops here? I honestly do not know. I certainly wish we could have tested the proposition.” Do you agree with that?

Mr. HARVEY. I think it would have been very helpful, sir, but it requires political engagement and a commitment to achieving the objectives that we have laid out—

Senator SESSIONS. But, Colonel Harvey—

Mr. HARVEY. If you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there, and I am afraid that we have not known where we are going with Iraq.

Senator SESSIONS. I would certainly agree with that. But in 2011 we had somehow with American influence negotiated an understanding with the Shia and the Sunni and the Kurds. The country, as the President acknowledged, was on a sound path. When we left, it began to fall apart. We can blame Maliki if we want to, which is ultimately the problem, but maybe if we had kept our influence there and they knew we were going to be there giving them confidence, perhaps they would have stayed the course with the progress that had been made by 2011.

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, I think that it would have made a difference. It depends upon how you act on the information. We had significant early and often warning about the Islamic State emerging threat going back to late 2012, 2013. Clearly DIA Director General Flynn was highlighting that to the different committees. Ambassador Brett McGurk was highlighting the deterioration of the situation. Even though you have warning, though, you have to have someone who is going to act on it and not wish that Iraq would be in the rear view mirror.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, it is certainly a complicated situation, and it will remain that way for 30-plus years. Hopefully not.

With regard to the—my time is about out, but I will just say, Dr. Takeyh, that I do not think any agreement is good in itself, as you have indicated. If it leads us to have a misunderstanding about what likely is going to occur in the future, that would be bad. If Iran continues to maintain its determination to go forward with a nuclear weapon, if we reach an agreement, our ability to sanctions and other actions could weaken and could also cause us to lose credibility in the region.

Senator McCain had a group of observers of smart people tell us that they think Iran has no intention whatsoever of slowing down its action and that negotiations are simply a way to get relief from the sanctions as they continue their plot to go forward with a nuclear weapon.

Dr. TAKEYH. Well, I absolutely agree with that, Senator. And I think in response to Senator Reed’s question, I suggested a good agreement is a nice thing to have, but a deficient agreement that has residual enrichment capacity, a limited sunset clause, does not include the ballistic missiles, does not discuss previous military dimensions of the program, upon which a viable verification regime can only be built on—even a 1-year breakout period I do not believe is sufficient. So I think if an agreement does not cover all these issues and all these concerns in a real viable way, then I am not quite sure if any agreement is suitable.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator King?

Senator KING. Mr. Chairman, I first want to thank you particularly for this hearing but the series of hearings that we have had. Abraham Lincoln once said if he was given an hour to split a cord of wood, he would spend the first 15 minutes sharpening his axe. And that is what we are doing here, is trying to think a bit instead of just doing. And I commend you for that. In fact, this hearing has helped me to think through.

Dr. Pollack, I do not know if there is a question buried in here. I will it to you to find it. [Laughter.]

Senator KING. But it seems to me that what we are seeing—you mentioned the phrase, “I’ve seen this movie before.” And we have seen this movie, the whole movie before. It was called Europe from 1500 to 1950. We have got six historic trends that I can see: tribalism to nationalism; autocracy to some kind of democracy; economic democracy; number four, corrupt, incompetent government to reasonably competent, non-corrupt government. And then that is European history. And then we have got Sunni and Shia divisions that go back 1,200 years. We have got a new division in there. We have got radical Shia. We have really got three strains now that are contending. And then on top of everything else, we have got Persian-Arab, which goes back to Darius the Great. So we are dealing with an unbelievably complex series of historic trends that have, in fact, played out with catastrophic wars, civil wars. And on top of all that, we are watching this play out in a very brief period of time with 21st century weapons.

Am I accurately reflecting all these trends that are occurring all at once?

Dr. POLLACK. Senator, I find myself in complete agreement with you, and it goes back to my answer to—

Senator KING. That is why I addressed my question—[Laughter.]

Dr. POLLACK. And I think you have also got a very good model there because we do need to remember. We sometimes forget this. We look at Europe now. It is wonderful. We all like to go on vacation—

Senator KING. We had a world war 60 years ago.

Dr. POLLACK. Exactly. And as you point out, for 500 years Europe was the worst continent on the planet by far. Every horrific thing that mankind has ever experienced, it experienced in Europe and to the worst extent possible.

Senator KING. And we had a little matter of a civil war here.

Dr. POLLACK. A little matter of that.

But inherent in that comment, it also gets to the importance of a solution and thinking long-term about it because when we finally did in 1945 decide, you know, what, we cannot allow Europe to continue to create these problems for the world and for us and we actually got serious about it and moved Europe toward a process of reform, securing the area, and pushing the governments toward democratization, it took 40 years but it succeeded.

We did the same thing in East Asia. We started to do the same thing beginning in the 1980’s in Latin America. And East Asia and Latin America are both moving very smartly. And you and I can both remember times when we had horrible, vicious wars, ethnic

cleansing, et cetera in both East Asia and in Latin America. Again, it took the United States saying we are going to get serious. We are going to make a long-term investment. We are going to move these countries toward reform.

That is what is lacking in the Middle East. We have never been willing to do so. We keep just trying to slap a band-aid on the problem and hope it goes away. It does not. It gets worse and worse.

Senator KING. And military is part of it, but the underlying dynamic is better lives for people.

Dr. POLLACK. Exactly. It is political. It is economic. It is social.

Senator KING. A question that sort of comes out of this—Mr. Harvey, you have had a lot of experience in Iraq. Can Iraq be one country? The term “inclusiveness” comes trippingly to the tongue. But are you ever going to have Sunnis and Shias, given the historic division, able to live in the same country without the kind of slights, oppression, discrimination that keep raising their head and, in fact, are raising their head right now in the attempt to retake Tikrit?

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, it is very difficult when you have the extremes dominating the debate and shaping the security environment the way they are. But at its core, I think there are a lot of reasons to be optimistic about the continued possibility of a unified Iraq. There are very good reasons for the Kurdish regional government to stay aligned with Baghdad. First and foremost is they are significantly better off on a per capita basis getting part of that Iraqi oil wealth. And what they would have on their own is dwarfed by what they could get on a per capita basis out of Baghdad.

Similarly with the Sunni Arabs who do not have that type of wealth—a potential in Anbar, but it is still a problem for them. But at a human level, there has always been a great deal of interconnectedness. Shia and Sunni tribes? intermarriage and those types of things. It has been the breakdown of civil order, the fracturing of the normalcy there, and the economic dislocation, and the fear that penetrates every part of that society about what their future looks like, which causes people to align on a sectarian basis right now.

First and foremost, security. Give them hope with political agreements. It takes leadership. I do not think they can get there on their own. It takes U.S. engagement, in partnership with others in the region, but that is easier said than done.

Senator KING. Abadi is the key right now. Abadi is the key.

Mr. HARVEY. I think he is essentially a good man but, as I said in my opening comment, fairly isolated and weak at this point in time.

Dr. TAKEYH. Can I just say one thing? Every time Iraq goes through one of its tribulations, there are arguments made on this partition. A partition of Iraq in three states does not enhance the stability of the Middle East. It does not enhance the stability of that subregion of the Middle East because it makes all—

Senator KING. I was not making a—

Dr. TAKEYH. No, no, no. I understand that.

Senator KING. I was just trying to make a pragmatic—

Dr. TAKEYH. There is a resilience to the Iraqi national identity that has survived all these sectarian conflicts. I think for a lot of

reasons the Iraqis would want to maintain in a unitary state that has some degree of autonomy for the promises and the regional parliaments and so forth. But I do think that there is a history of Iraq as a unitary state with——

Senator KING. Only since 1918 or 1921 or 1922.

Dr. TAKEYH. But there is an Iraqi national identity. And as Ken suggested, it did emerge in 2007–2009 to supersede some of the sectarian concerns.

Senator KING. A quick question, Dr. Takeyh, a follow-up on Iran. You recently had a very interesting article with Michael Hayden about the technology of a violation and this idea of a 1-year breakout. Once you got to all the steps of reporting and verifying and everything else, it comes down to a couple of months. Could you articulate that? I think that is a very important point.

Dr. TAKEYH. I want to, first of all, suggest that any arms control agreement—and the history of arms control agreements suggest it—is difficult to redress violations of that agreement. Now, that was true about SALT II. That is true about ABM. We were in a process of trying to adjudicate——

Senator KING. The INF——

Dr. TAKEYH. The INF agreement. That is right.

There have been—the notion of a 1-year breakout time suggests that 1 year is a sufficient time for the international community to come to terms on coercive measures to compel Iranians to stop is a tough case to make because all the agencies of the U.S. Government have to agree. The IAEA has to begin a conversation with——

Senator KING. The Germans, the Chinese, the Indians.

Dr. TAKEYH. Well, first is the Americans agreeing among themselves that there is a violation. And there is going to be investment in this particular agreement. Then the IAEA will begin a conversation with the Iranians about those infractions, and they may have some satisfactory resolution or as Parchin military base has indicated, they may not.

Then it comes to the Security Council for contemplation of coercive measures to be implemented, and they usually begin with economic sanctions if there is an agreement among the 5+1. And they may not be because of the Russians and Chinese, not to mention Germany and others. And then you can apply that.

Now, can an American President avoid all that and use force? Technically yes. Has it happened historically? No. And in the aftermath of the Iraq War of 2003, all American intelligence agencies are going to be more hesitant about WMD violations. The international community is going to be more skeptical, and any American President is likely to be more cautious.

Senator KING. So one of the things we should look at in this agreement is the bureaucracy of enforcement.

Dr. TAKEYH. I think inherently it is difficult to enforce violations of an agreement particularly if they are incremental. Let me give you three examples of violations.

Senator KING. I am afraid I am out of time. But that does not mean you do not try to get an agreement, but maybe this is an aspect of it we should focus upon.

Dr. TAKEYH. That is right.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Graham?

Senator GRAHAM. Let us make this relevant to the American people. From our own national security interest, a Sunni-Shia conflict of great depth and breadth is not good for us. Do we all agree with that?

If you could, Dr. Rand, in 30 seconds, tell me why.

Dr. RAND. Sure. A great regional divide that is sectarian in nature will play out in the worst possible way. We are seeing it in Syria and Iraq. You see it in Lebanon, elsewhere. So it will lead to conflict. It will lead to de-democratization. It will lead to weakening of states and leadership and the inability of central states to address the economic and political demands of their people.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, it lead to higher gas prices?

Dr. RAND. Potentially. It depends which way the conflicts go.

Senator GRAHAM. Will it make it harder to do business throughout the world?

Dr. RAND. Potentially.

Senator GRAHAM. When it comes to Syria, do any of you believe we have a plan in place that will destroy ISIL in Syria in the next 3 years?

Mr. HARVEY. There is no plan in place that would achieve that in the next 3 years, sir, in my view.

Senator GRAHAM. Does everyone agree with that?

Dr. POLLACK. I might take slight exception. I think that the plan laid out by Chairman Dempsey before this committee theoretically could do so in about 2 to 5 years. But it has to be properly resourced, and it has to be properly implemented. And there I do not see—

Senator GRAHAM. On a scale of 1 to 10, what is the likelihood of this plan working in the next 3 years?

Dr. POLLACK. Again, Senator, that depends on how well the United States pursues it. Given what we are doing now, I would give it about a 2.

Senator GRAHAM. All right. What happens the day after? Well, do you all agree that no Arab army, if we could ever form one, is going to go into Syria and just fight ISIL and leave Assad in charge?

Dr. POLLACK. I would completely with that, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. Does everybody agree with that?

Dr. POLLACK. I think it is a complete mistake to think that we can build a Syrian opposition army that will only fight Daesh. They will not.

Senator GRAHAM. Does everybody agree with that?

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, I also think that we need the Turkish Government on side for that.

Senator GRAHAM. Right, and they are not going to get involved if you leave Assad in power.

Mr. HARVEY. Absolutely correct.

Senator GRAHAM. Because you are giving Syria to the Iranians if you leave Assad in power. Right?

Mr. HARVEY. For the long haul, yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, from an American point of view, if Syria is not resolved in the next 3 to 5 years, do you worry about our allies in Lebanon and Jordan?

Dr. POLLACK. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Could they be one of the victims of a protracted civil war in Syria?

Dr. POLLACK. Absolutely. They are already suffering from the spillover of that civil war.

Dr. TAKEYH. And I think it leads to radicalization of the Sunni community. Syria is a great incubator for radicalizing the Sunni community because of the level of slaughter there, which destabilizes all the other places, particularly the neighboring countries.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you agree that the terrorist organizations that are operating in Syria and Iraq, Yemen—if they are not dealt with more effectively, we could get hit here at home? The likelihood of an attack is going up on the homeland.

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, I think there intent and there is capability to strike not only the Western European targets but U.S. targets in the homeland that will increase over time, undoubtedly.

Senator GRAHAM. So the more foreign fighters that flow into Syria and Iraq to help ISIL and other organizations makes it more difficult for us to prevent the next attack because some of them have passports that could work their way back here. Right?

Mr. HARVEY. Affirmative.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, let us talk a little bit about Iran. Without a nuclear weapon, do you agree with me that Iran is wreaking havoc in the region?

Mr. HARVEY. Correct.

Dr. POLLACK. Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Everybody agrees with that.

Dr. POLLACK. I would agree, Senator, but I would also say that I think we are allowing them to wreak havoc in the region.

Senator GRAHAM. I could not agree with you more.

Chairman MCCAIN. Could I say Dr. Rand may want to—

Dr. RAND. Yes. I want to try to clarify that. I would not call it “wreaking havoc.” I would say increasing its interventionism and its expansionism.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, I think they are creating disorder in order to enhance their ability to intervene and offer themselves as a solution.

Senator GRAHAM. Would you agree with me that if they had more money, probably they would not build hospitals and schools with it if the current regime had more money?

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, even under the constrained times they have had, they have probably provided over \$4 billion to subsidize the Syrian Government in the last 18 months.

Senator GRAHAM. So the idea that if sanctions were lifted and you infused their economy with more money, do you agree with me it would be more likely than not some of that money, if not most of it, would go to destabilizing the region?

Dr. TAKEYH. I do not know how they apportion their budget, but I suspect—

Senator GRAHAM. Well, if past behavior is any indication of future action, the answer would be yes.

Dr. TAKEYH. I agree with that, yes.

Dr. RAND. I mean, we do not really know because there is a great demand by the people of Iran.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, we know what they are doing now.

Dr. RAND. Right, but the sanctions relief might be funneled to respond to the demands of the people.

Senator GRAHAM. But I do not know how much influence the Iranian people have over their own budget.

But here is what I am saying. The likelihood of more money in the hands of this regime to me creates more possibility for destabilization unless they change their behavior.

Finally, is there a moderate hard-line divide in Iran in your view that is meaningful?

Mr. HARVEY. Sir, I said in my opening comments that there really is not a divide that is meaningful to the outcomes that we are interested in here today. The hardliners have a lock on the levers of power there, Qods Force and the hardliners in the Council of Guardians and elsewhere. A moderate voice is, I think, not really hopeful of emerging in that country.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you all generally agree with that?

Dr. POLLACK. I see a wide division of views within Iran. But I do agree with Colonel Harvey that at the end of the day, I think that the Supreme Leader is the one who calls the shots, and he has tended to move Iran in the direction mostly consistent with the hard-line viewpoint.

Dr. TAKEYH. I would just say there is diversity of views, but on core security issues, I think there is more consensus than disagreement.

Dr. RAND. I would just add if you look at the speeches of Rouhani and Zarif, you see greater pragmatism than some of their other colleagues in the government.

Senator GRAHAM. Yes. And their speeches and their action in the assembly of experts apparently is now in the hand of a pretty tough dude.

Last question. I am over my time. Do you all agree that a bad deal with Iran would manifest itself with the Arab breakout in terms of their nuclear desires, that the worst possible outcome with a deal with the Iranians is to create a nuclear arms race in the Mideast where the Arabs felt like they needed to have a nuclear weapon of their own?

Dr. TAKEYH. I think we will see proliferation of nuclear technologies in the region, not necessarily nuclear weapons, but perhaps other countries trying to experiment with an enrichment capacity or plutonium plants. I think we will see some sort of a proliferation of that as Sunni Arabs try to match Iran's nuclear capabilities.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you very much.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Cotton?

Senator COTTON. The Middle East is a place of many dangerous and complex questions, and the answer in whole or in part to virtually every one of those questions is Iran.

Why, after all, are we negotiating with the Islamic Revolution over their nuclear weapons program, but for the President's quest to harpoon the great white whale of a nuclear agreement with Iran?

Why is Bashar al-Assad still in power years after the President said he must go but for any reason because Iran views Syria as a legitimate sphere of interest and the President has largely conceded that sphere?

Why is the Secretary of State wrong-footing himself repeatedly on our policy with Syria? Because the President is now effectively allowing Assad to stay in power.

Why are the Qods Force increasingly the dominant force inside of Iraq, and why is Qasem Suleimani, the commander of the Qods Force, a man with the blood of hundreds of American troops on his hand, showing up like a celebrity on Facebook and other social media throughout Iraq? Because Iran views Iraq as a sphere of its interests and the West appears ready to grant that to Iran.

Why did Yemen fall to Shiite militants that chant 'death to America' and 'death to Israel'? Again, because they are aligned with Iran.

Why is our campaign against the Islamic State going so slowly and haltingly? Because we are more concerned about upsetting Iran's interest in the region.

And why is Hezbollah still so strong in Lebanon? Because they remain Iran's terrorist cat's paw.

In the face of all these negotiations with Iran and its drive for regional hegemony, the President has said repeatedly that he will not allow Iran to get a nuclear weapon and threat of force remains on the table. However, Dr. Takeyh, you say on page 6 of your testimony, "Iran today pointedly dismisses the possibility of U.S. military retaliation irrespective of its provocations." Would you care to elaborate on that?

Dr. TAKEYH. I do not believe at this particular point that they take the threat of American military retribution seriously. They could be miscalculating. I mean, the history of international relations is a history of miscalculations. But I do not believe they see themselves as vulnerable to a military strike. And that is often the case when you have a diplomatic process. I mean, diplomatic process is something that nobody wants to disrupt by actually undertaking military action against one of the participants.

Senator COTTON. Do you believe that the President's refusal to enforce his own red line against Bashar al-Assad's regime in September of 2013 did anything to make Iran believe that he would not actually use the threat of force in any credible fashion?

Dr. TAKEYH. As I think I mentioned in my opening remarks, the fact that we erase our red lines as carelessly as we drew them had an effect on the credibility of American deterrence.

Senator COTTON. Now I would like to draw your attention to something you say shortly down the page on page 6. "While America's military option has receded in the Iranian imagination, Israel still looms large. Fulminations aside, Iranian leaders take Israeli threats seriously and are at pains to assert their retaliatory options. It is here that the shape and tone of the U.S.-Israeli alliance matters most. Should the clerical regime sense divisions in that al-

liance, they can assure themselves that a beleaguered Israel cannot possibly strike Iran while at odds with its superpower patron." Can you elaborate further?

Dr. TAKEYH. Yes. Sure. I think that the divisions and the problems and tensions in U.S.-Israeli relations have not well affected Israeli deterrence posture as well because the view is that the two powers, Israel and the United States, are in such disagreement. Again, that might be a miscalculation. Israeli officials and the Israeli Government has in the past used military force at the times when the United States did not approve of it. But at this point, I think the perception is that Israel is somewhat restrained in terms of its military posture because—

Senator COTTON. Could that be because anonymous White House officials have been quoted in Western media reports saying that they have effectively delayed Israel's opportunity to strike Iran before they get a nuclear weapon?

Dr. TAKEYH. I think such disclosures are not helpful. But I do think that I am not entirely sure that Israel is bent on a military action against the Iranian nuclear facilities anyway. So we may be restraining a power that wants to be self-restrained.

Senator COTTON. Diplomacy is always more effective when backed by the credible threat of force, though. Correct?

Dr. TAKEYH. That is right, yes.

Senator COTTON. Even if perhaps not the American credible threat of force.

Dr. TAKEYH. Sure.

Senator COTTON. So as you say, divisions in that alliance could undermine even that threat in the perception of Iran's leaders. And last week in the aftermath of Benjamin Netanyahu's decisive victory in Iran, the President and many of his senior advisors made several statements that they would have to reconsider our relationship with Israel, that they might allow the United Nations or other international institutions to take adverse action against Israel in an unfair and discriminatory pattern as is their history.

As you may also be aware, Ayatollah Khamenei gave his annual Nowruz message on Saturday, just 3 days ago, in which he whipped the crowd into frenzied chants of "death to America." And his response was, "yes, certainly, death to America." And yesterday, the President's spokesman said that it just for domestic political consumption.

Do you believe the reaction to Benjamin Netanyahu's statements in a democratic election versus the reaction to Ayatollah Khamenei's statement discredits Benjamin Netanyahu as a critic of the President's negotiations, undermines our relationship with Israel, and helps change our relationship with Iran?

Dr. TAKEYH. Well, to separate the two issues, I do think that it is in the interest of both the United States and Israel to get beyond the point of disagreements that they have and try to rehabilitate the alliance. That is good for Israel. That is good for the United States. That is good for diplomacy toward Iran.

As far as Ali Khamenei trying to satiate a domestic audience by chanting "death to America," I do not know who that is. Most of the Iranians do not share his animosity toward America. So when he says those things, he actually is expressing his own opinion, an

opinion of many hard-line groups that share his proscriptive ideology.

Senator COTTON. I suggest that when people chant “death to America,” we should take them seriously and reconsider whether we want to make nuclear concessions to such people and their regime.

My time has expired. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the witnesses. A number of topics.

First, on the Foreign Relations Committee, now we are engaged in a discussion about finally authorizing the current war against ISIL. And I believe strongly Congress does need to do this. There are couple of sort of disputed points that we are kind of working through, and that is the wisdom of U.S. ground troops in such an engagement, what our posture should be in a war against ISIL vis-a-vis the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria. Those are two fairly critical areas where even in a body that overwhelmingly supports military action against ISIL, both the House and Senate—both parties do—there are some details that are important. I think we can get to a compromise, but there are details that are important.

I would love your thoughts sort of on either of those points: you know, ground troops and how they should be used and also what should sort of the mission definition be in Syria in any authorization that we do.

Dr. POLLACK. I am glad to start, Senator, and I will start by saying that I think that an AUMF is very important. I have always believed that having congressional support for major American foreign policy endeavors is absolutely critical in sustaining support over the long term.

Second point. I think that initial ground troops will be necessary in Iraq, and they may prove necessary to some extent in Syria. Here I am thinking about the JTAC's, the air liaison officers.

But I also go back to a point that Colonel Harvey raised earlier on. I think that one of the critical elements missing from the Iraq advisory program is the accompany mission. I think that we do need American advisors down to brigade and battalion level accompanying Iraqis in the field both for the reason that Colonel Harvey mentioned, which is that it makes these forces more efficient, but also because it gives us a much greater ability to control the behavior of those forces. I think back, Senators Reed and McCain, to 2006 when I can remember being in Iraq and having Iraqis say to me we get frightened when Iraqi troops come into our village and there are no Americans with them because we do not know who they are going to kill. If there are Americans with them, they tend to behave themselves. And so I think that accompany mission is absolutely critical to the political future of Iraq in ensuring that these forces do not run amuck as they have in a number of instances.

And last point. With regard to Bashar al-Assad's regime, I believe that a solution in Syria is impossible as long as Bashar al-Assad remains in charge of the Syrian regime. I think that the Alawi community will have to be brought in, will have to be represented in a future power sharing arrangement, but I think that

Bashar himself and a number of key allies around him must go. And as we were talking about earlier, I think that it is foolish to believe that we can build a Syrian opposition army solely to prosecute a war against ISIS. It must be used to deal with the Assad regime and, in fact, the entire panoply of bad actors in Syria because it has to be about ending the Syrian civil war, not just killing ISIS.

Senator KAINE. Other thoughts?

Dr. RAND. Sure. I would add that the importance of the AUMF is a signaling device in addition to the authorization here. It is showing the credibility of what is already going on and what is happening and the intent and the support of the American people. So I think it is absolutely important to authorize this force.

On the ground combat operations, there is a sunset clause in the draft language, and I think that is a very important part of this because part of the strategy against ISIS inherently involves a checking in or reporting requirement and seeing how things are going. This is a very fluid situation. So I would urge Members of Congress to look at reporting requirements and the sunset clause as also a way to see how the operation is going and what new types of offensive ground combat operations are needed over time.

And then finally, on Syria, I am not sure if this draft language of AUMF is the right place to authorize use of force against Syria. But, of course, the debate needs to be, as Dr. Pollack has outlined, what is the plan for the reinsertion of these forces. How are they going to get in? Where are they going to go in? What are the priority areas? How are they going to work with the changing coalitions of Syrian oppositionists that every week are changing partners? And the other question is, what is the role of the Kurds in this part of Syria, particularly in the northeast?

Senator KAINE. Let me ask a second question. U.S. policy since President Truman—and I consider myself a Truman Democrat or I would like to be one day thought to be a Truman Democrat. That is a high standard to meet. U.S. policy with respect to Israel has been to strongly support Israel as our ally, but also to support the notion of a Palestinian state. That was the original U.N. mandate and it was reaffirmed in the Oslo Accords, and that is official U.S. policy.

I think it is safe to say that at least now sort of the official policy of the Israeli Government may be different. Both President Rivlin and now Prime Minister Netanyahu have indicated that there will not be a second state. I do not really see a one-state solution working, but maybe I have not figured out how it can.

But given that the stated position of both the prime minister and the president of Israel at this point are contrary to what has been U.S. policy supporting two states, what, if anything, should the United States do now that there is that gulf in policy between our two nations? Should the U.S. change our policy, or should we keep the policy we have? And what should we do to try to make that a reality?

Mr. HARVEY. Well, sir, I would say that the overall atmospherics in the relationship between the United States and Israel has clearly undermined the Israeli confidence about moving forward in a number of areas, and this is one that you have highlighted. It is

hard to make difficult decisions that go at your core political support at home, that go to the real threat to your country. They had a 50-day war last year with Gaza, after giving up in agreement after agreement after agreement things to the Gazans and Hamas. And when they look at the West Bank and you look at the one-state solution, first and foremost, you have to have confidence in your long-term security and what those arrangements might be. And right now, there is tremendous doubt in Tel Aviv about the strength of our relationship and whatever the sidebar decisions would be that are going to affect this overall agreement of a two-state solution. So I think, first and foremost, you have to right the ship politically, diplomatically between the two countries in order to create the environment that you might be able to move forward on.

Senator KAINE. I am just curious. Are you suggesting that the disclaiming of the idea of two states is the United States' fault?

Mr. HARVEY. No. What I am saying is that the impact—if you are in Tel Aviv and you are thinking about where you are headed with this two-state solution, you cannot discount the friction and the undermining from their view of

their relationship with Washington, D.C. It has to impact these other decisions.

Senator KAINE. I have no other questions, Mr. Chair. But if any other witnesses would care to comment on that—I am over my time, but—

Dr. TAKEYH. I will just briefly say that in the 1990's there was a notion that a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would transform the region. I do not believe that is true. But I also think the absence of that resolution does contribute to the instability of the region. And I think the prime minister's advocacy on Iran and other issues would have much more force and legitimacy if he had a more forthcoming approach toward the Palestinian problem.

Dr. POLLACK. Senator, I will add to that while I would not want to characterize Prime Minister Netanyahu's position, because I do not feel like I understand it at the moment, I will simply say that I continue to believe that the best policy for the United States is to pursue the two-state solution. I believe that that is just. I believe it is equitable. As you pointed out, it was the original intent of the United Nations, and quite frankly, I do not see—no one has ever shown me a workable alternative, a one-state solution, a three-state solution, that both preserves the Jewish character and Israeli democracy. And that being the case, I see no reason for the United States to deviate from that policy and every reason for the United States to continue to advocate it as best we possibly can.

Senator KAINE. Dr. Rand?

Dr. RAND. I would just completely agree that the two-state solution has been the policy of the United States for decades and the policy of the international community and offers the U.S. and Israelis in my opinion the best option for living in peace and stability and security of the State of Israel.

I would also add that I think it is dangerous to over-dramatize the current political tensions between Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Washington in the sense that the broad national security apparatuses between the two countries—the relationships are very

strong and very thick, as this committee knows, in terms of defense appropriations having reached last year I think an unprecedented \$3 billion in FMF, the Iron Dome, other missile defense programs. So there is a thickness to the relationship that is actually improving and increasing at the non-political level. And that portends a very important trend in U.S.-Israeli relations that supersedes the personalities of individual leaders.

Senator KAINE. Great. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I went over, but I appreciate you letting the witnesses take that question.

Senator REED. Senator McCain has been very gracious to allow me to ask questions at the conclusion. Senator Hirono has just arrived, and so I will yield to Senator Hirono. Then when she is finished, I will ask questions.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you very much.

This is a question for all of the witnesses to respond as you desire, a broader framing. The instability of multiple nations throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, has become a growing threat to U.S. interests by providing ungoverned space for extremism to operate. How do we balance the ever-increasing economic gap between developing nations and their vulnerability to power vacuums with radical ethnic and/or religious philosophies that appeal to rising young adult populations? Does anyone care to respond?

Dr. RAND. Sure. This is an excellent question because this gets at the root drivers of some of the trends that we have been discussing that a lot of the U.S. foreign policy responses have to be predicated on what is actually going on.

Here I would just raise two points in response to this question. One is that the rise in economic opportunity by some and the rise in education in the 1990's and 2000's actually created higher expectations among many of the youth in the region. So you had higher graduation rates across the Middle East and North Africa, including in many of the countries that saw a revolution in 2011, without the commensurate supply of jobs that were at the level for university graduates. And this is a serious problem and endures across the region. So there is a job retraining educational element to the economic dilemma.

But the second point is that there are natural resources and economic sources of revenue in many of these states. So the key question is how to reform some of the state economic decision-making so that the budgets are growing and so that the state can use its resources and use its revenue, whether it is from oil or foreign aid or other assistance, to create the kind of market economies that will provide jobs and provide opportunity.

Dr. POLLACK. Senator, if I could just add to Dr. Rand's very cogent comments. I would like to pull out one of her points which I think is absolutely critical, and that is the role of education. And I would commend to you, if you have not already seen it, the Arab Human Development reports, in particular the volumes issued in 2002 and 2003. These are landmark reports by Arab scholars and Arab experts looking at their own part of the world, commissioned by the United Nations.

And the critical point that they came to was that, as Dr. Rand has pointed out, there has been a massive growth in the quantity

of education provided to Arabs, but no corresponding improvement in the quality of the education they receive. They continue to be taught by rote memorization with the disparagement of critical thinking in ways that do not equip Arabs to become productive members of an information economy. And as a result, you have gotten more and more people with high school and college degrees who believe that they are entitled to become middle and upper class citizens of their communities and of the world, but they simply do not have the skills to function as such. This is the most critical gap in the Arab world today. And again, it is a problem that is not going to be solved in the next 2 years or the next 10 years, but if we do want to help the Arab world move out of its current state of affairs, it is one that we need to help them address.

Senator HIRONO. Well, following up then, are we doing something to address these kinds of institutional changes that need to occur with regard to the quality of their education?

Dr. RAND. This is an excellent question, and this is an area where the U.S. State Department and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is actively involved and has been for decades. Again, the going is tough.

So in some parts of the region, there are still states functioning and there are a lot of reforms going on and the U.S. Government is working in places like Morocco and Tunisia. Even in Libya before this current round of fighting, there was a new authorization and appropriation for telelearning programs, education programs. So there is creative work that the U.S. Government is doing to try to address these gaps.

The challenge is that there is an increasing number of states in the region where there is great instability and conflict. So we have four or five states where there is either failure or a civil conflict right now. And those states are providing a real challenge.

And the other challenge is combating the appeal of foreign fighters and radicalization as part of this because the ISIS recruiters can work much faster than the international programs to support education and long-term job growth programs.

Senator HIRONO. Can you point to a nation in the Middle East that is a model for the kind of changes that would really address the underlying problems or challenges in the Middle East that lead to instability?

Dr. RAND. There is no one model that comes to mind. There are isolated programs that either the governments or the international community have introduced in Morocco, in Tunisia, in Jordan in particular that come to mind as useful. Again, it is very hard to measure the effect of an intervention on the outcome because a lot of this is a lot of different factors. International assistance can help and can work, and the U.S. should continue to do this even though it is hard, even though there are obvious demands on the budget.

Mr. HARVEY. I think when we talk about the region, we have to recognize that the problems are different for the Gulf where addressing educational quality is an issue, the critical thinking, but it is different in North Africa and different in Syria. If you cannot establish security and address the building of the institutional capacity so the state not only controls the means of policing and the means of violence in the state but can deliver some services and

is exactly the go-to place and is relevant to people's lives, then you are going to have some real problems.

But the international community on a broader scale, whether it is USAID or others, large-scale projects tend not to work. A lot of the projects we have tend to be well-intentioned but not aligned with the social, cultural, business approaches there. We do not have good conditions-based metrics or conditions-based programs that require some accounting in a way that would be more transparent. And so it enables corruption in ways that become very dysfunctional.

Or you engage in a place like Afghanistan with significant programs that, in effect, draw the entrepreneurial and the educated that are needed for other programs—they draw them to these larger USAID projects in a dysfunctional way. We need to keep the nurses and the doctors in the medical field not working in a USAID project because they speak English and make more money because we brought in a different pay scale that attracts these people. There are so many different things that seem to be going wrong when we try to do good things.

Dr. POLLACK. Senator, if I could just quickly. I would actually point to Saudi Arabia.

Senator HIRONO. With the indulgence of the chair.

Dr. POLLACK. Thank you, Senator.

I would actually point to Saudi Arabia for three different reasons, and I know it seems ironic because we typically think of Saudi Arabia as an utterly repressive, medieval regime. But under King Abdullah, there was a very determined effort to try to reform the Saudi educational system. King Abdullah tried to press for co-education. He tried to press for a change in curriculum. He tried to press for Western instructors and Western methods of achievement.

Now, a few things in order. First, it was largely a Saudi-driven process. It was the king and his advisors who recognized the importance of the need to do it and that pretty much did it on their own. We need to be looking elsewhere in the region for other Arabs who are willing to take this on themselves and then ask the question of how can we help you, which is about the best that we are going to do because they are going to have to drive this train themselves.

Second, it is worth noting that the king had modest success. He did create King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, which is kind of, sort of a model for what could happen. And he did make some progress toward curriculum reform, co-education, a variety of other things. But it only moved so far. And we have to recognize that these kinds of big changes are going to move haltingly.

And the third point to make is the reason that they only went so far is because the king was resisted by a whole variety of different factors within his society, the clergy, the bureaucracy, others with vested interest in the current society. And again, we need to recognize that these were all obstacles that need to be overcome.

But, again, I think that Saudi Arabia in some ways is a wonderful case study to look at over the last 10 years of how to move things forward but also the difficulties in doing so, difficulties that

we should be thinking creatively of how we might help them overcome.

Senator HIRONO. Do you think Qatar would also qualify for that kind of change?

Dr. POLLACK. Qatar is difficult for reasons that I think that Colonel Harvey alluded to, which is that Qatar is unlike pretty much anything other than conceivably the UAE and Kuwait. It is not a great model for the larger states of the region. It is a tiny, little population. It is obscenely wealthy. They are able to do things in ways that no one else in the region can. And so we can look at them and again say, well, maybe there is something here that Arabs might look to as something they might some day emulate, but I think that the reality is that it is not a close enough approximation of the circumstances of the rest of the region to serve as a practical model.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. Thank you, Senator Hirono.

And I want to thank the chairman for convening this hearing. It is extraordinarily thoughtful, insightful, and timely. And thank you all for your testimony.

Just a couple of questions, and I asked the chairman if I could pose these. I was in the chamber and I listened to Prime Minister Netanyahu. It was a very eloquent and very powerful discussion. But one of the points I seem to recall is he said if we reject this agreement, we will get a better agreement. Do you believe that would be the case, Dr. Takeyh, that after all this effort and the political capital that all sides have laid down, that we will simply get a better agreement?

Dr. TAKEYH. I think it is an impossible proposition to verify. It can only be validated in practice. And the prime minister's position was that if this agreement proves unsatisfactory, you can go back and increase the level of pressure on Iran through the international community and so on and possibly come back with a more superior agreement.

There have been times in history of arms control where that has taken place where you have gone back and revisited some of the issues and so on. The Iranian regime does have vulnerabilities less so today than it did in November 2013. I think it is fair to say—and I think history will validate this—that we could have gotten a better agreement than the joint plan of action in November 2013. I think that is largely true. At that time, the country was essentially suffering 7 percent negative economic growth. Today it is about 1–2 percent growth. At that time the Rouhani regime needed some sort of a validation of his strategy of his electoral claims, and at that time, Iran was much more vulnerable. And history has shown that Iranian presidents tend to be stronger in the first year than every other year. That is not unique to their presidency. You see it in other chief executives.

Today there is more resilience in the system, more economic resilience, a greater degree of consensus, less measure of factionalism. It will be harder to do that today. I do not believe it is impossible. We have to consider the fact that these are negotiations between the international community and a superpower and a sec-

ond-rate power with substantial vulnerability in terms of economic deficiencies, in terms of popular dissent, disaffection, and in terms of elite fragmentation. I cannot rule it out, but I can tell you it is going to be harder.

Senator REED. Dr. Pollack?

Dr. POLLACK. Senator, I find myself very much in agreement with Dr. Takeyh's statement, my good friend. My body language might be a bit different than his, though. I think that everything that he has just said is absolutely accurate. We do not know. We will not know until we test the proposition.

I also agree that we might have done better, and I wish we had done some things differently in terms of the tactics of how we got here, but given where we are, I think it unlikely that we will get a better agreement. And I think that a lot of this has to do with how the world now sees these negotiations, and I am quite concerned that if the United States walks away from this current agreement, as imperfect as it may be, that the rest of the world will blame us for doing so, not the Iranians, and that will make it very difficult to get a better deal.

Dr. TAKEYH. I just want to say one thing very briefly. We do not have an agreement at this point. We have a negotiating process. Therefore, some of the deficiencies that have been highlighted, duration of sunset clause, absence of PMD—I think Secretary Kerry can strengthen his case internationally and here by going back and revisiting some of those issues.

Senator REED. No. I do not think there is a question there.

But I want Colonel Harvey and Dr. Rand to comment also.

But just, Dr. Pollack, to follow up, your sort of sense is that given all the events, we are at a critical moment, and that if there is not an agreement, there is a question of will the sanctions regime stay in place. Do you think that is likely?

Dr. POLLACK. I am very concerned that it will begin to erode and erode quickly if we do not get an agreement soon.

Senator REED. Even with the sanctions regime in place and we do not have an agreement, do you believe that the Iranians will accelerate their efforts to develop a nuclear device or at least a virtual nuclear device rather than just simply sort of status quo?

Dr. POLLACK. That is a hard one to answer, Senator, because again I think it will be based on their calculation of how much they need it. And as I said, I do not think that they feel like they need a weapon right now, but I think it would also be calculated on their expectation of what is the best way to erode the sanctions regime. And again, I suspect that their feeling will be the best way to handle the breakdown of negotiations is to actually say, look, we do not want a nuclear weapon. We keep saying we do not want one. We are going to foreswear acquiring one at least for now to make clear that the Americans are the problem, not us.

Senator REED. And then again, I think we always have to think worst case, which is with or without an agreement, with or without the durability of sanctions, if we detect a movement away from compliance and they are developing a nuclear capacity or technology or a breakout that is not a year but weeks, then we are forced with the issue of military action. One of the arguments that is made is that without an agreement—and it seems to track what

you said about sort of the world kind of consensus—our ability to engage the world community at least supporting us, maybe even after the fact would be diminished. Is that fair?

Dr. POLLACK. I would agree with that. I think that we would be in a strong position to engage in military action which, again, I do not believe is the right course of action, but nevertheless, we would be in a stronger position with an agreement. And what is more, especially if we were seen as the party that walked away from the current negotiations, it would be very difficult for us to then come back to the world and say we would like international support to take military action against Iran for continuing to pursue their nuclear program.

Senator REED. Let me ask Colonel Harvey. I do not know if I promoted you or demoted. I almost called you “doctor.”

[Laughter.]

Senator REED. And then Dr. Rand, and then I will conclude.

Mr. HARVEY. We are not very good at maintaining a siege mentality against other countries, and I think that is part of the problem. I agree with everything I have heard heretofore on this issue.

I wish that we would have not decoupled the missiles and delivery means from this track of negotiations. I think we need more transparency and more work on that. I think it would have been much better if we could have kept that connected.

I am very concerned that we are not going to have the intelligence awareness and insights as to where they are at. And my belief, after studying this regime now for over 2 decades—and I used to be a missile and nuclear analyst at DIA on these issues—is that this is viewed in the leadership that matters in Tehran as just a transitional point, an obstacle to get over to continue to move in the direction because the character and nature of the regime is not fundamentally shifting, and we have not put any other conditions about behavior or missiles or other things to influence how that regime responds to this agreement.

Senator REED. Thank you, Colonel.

Dr. Rand, the last word, please.

Dr. RAND. I mean, I want to repeat what some of my colleagues have said but just emphatically say that I think the logic behind waiting for a better deal has a lot of holes in it. And the first one is this question of what is the course of pressure that you then mobilize in the moment after this current negotiation breakdown. Where are the multilateral sanctions and the international will? So I do not see how you pinch Iran to get them to the table in 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 years. I have never seen that explained.

But second, I think it is again just a question of what happens internal to Iran and domestic politics, which we do not want to rely on in terms of whether they go to accelerate nuclear weaponization in the aftermath of a failed deal. This is just a big unknown that will depend on a lot of things outside U.S. and international control. And I do not want to take that risk.

Senator REED. Well, thank you all very much.

I am going to, I think at this point, on behalf of Chairman McCain, thank you for extraordinarily effective and insightful testimony and recess the hearing. Adjourn it actually. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:53 a.m., the committee adjourned.]

UNITED STATES MIDDLE EAST POLICY

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2015

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:35 a.m. in Room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Senator John McCain (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators McCain, Inhofe, Sessions, Wicker, Ayotte, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Graham, Cruz, Reed, Nelson, McCaskill, Manchin, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, King, and Heinrich.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN, CHAIRMAN

Senator MCCAIN. Committee will come to order.

Since a quorum is now present, I ask the committee to consider a list of 3,725 pending military nominations. All of these nominations have been before the committee the required length of time.

Is there a motion to favorably report?

Senator REED. So moved.

Senator MCCAIN. Second?

Senator SESSIONS. Second.

Senator MCCAIN. All in favor, say aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

Senator MCCAIN. The motion carries.

Senate Armed Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony on United States strategy in the Middle East.

Eight years ago—eight years ago, our Nation was losing a war in Iraq. Despite the assurances of the Bush administration, the generals and leaders there, despite the favorable comments of, at that time, Secretary of Defense, who said, quote, “Stuff happens” and other equally ridiculous comments, we were losing the conflict. In fact, we were at a point where there was almost sufficient votes in the United States Senate to force a complete withdrawal from Iraq.

And then a seminal event took place before this committee, a day that I will never forget. On September 11th, 2007, General David Petraeus appeared before this committee with Ambassador Ryan Crocker. Their compelling testimony was critical in securing support for the surge. An integrated civil-military campaign plan that defeated al-Qaeda in Iraq brought security to the Iraqi people and created the possibility for meaningful political reconciliation.

Now we meet again. Now we meet again. At a time of grave security challenges around the world, more than ever our Nation must be able to draw upon the wisdom and experience of its most distinguished leaders. That's why I'm so pleased to welcome back before this committee—who has had many appearances before this committee—one of our most extinguished—distinguished leaders. I'm welcoming back General David Petraeus for his first appearance before Congress since leaving government.

General, it's good to see you. I want to thank you, on behalf of this committee, for your willingness to testify today and offer insights from your decades of distinguished service, especially your leadership in Iraq, Afghanistan, and as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Across the Middle East today, the old order is collapsing both the regional balance among states and social order within states. No new vision has emerged to take its place. And across the region, chaos fills the vast ungoverned spaces left behind. Filling this vacuum have been terrorist groups such as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Qaeda, on the one hand, and hostile states such as Iran and now Russia, on the other. This regional disintegration has only been made worse by a failure of U.S. strategy and leadership to shape events in this vital part of the world for the better. Too often, we have confused our friends, encouraged our enemies, mistaken an excess of caution for prudence, and replaced the risks of action with the perils of inaction.

In Iraq and Syria 1 year after the President commenced airstrikes and committed United States troops, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Commander of Central Command have characterized the fight against ISIL as a stalemate. ISIL has consolidated control of its core territories and expanded its control in Syria. Efforts to retake Iraqi cities, like Mosul, Fallujah, and Ramadi, have foundered. ISIL is expanding globally to places like Afghanistan, Lebanon and Yemen, Libya and Egypt. This appearance of success only enhances ISIL's ability to radicalize, recruit, and grow.

The Obama administration now tells us their strategy is working. Ultimately, ISIL is not 10 feet tall. It can and must be defeated. However, the current policy does not appear sufficient to achieve our goal of degrading and destroying ISIL. To put it mildly, this committee's hearing last week on counter-ISIL strategy did little to alleviate these concerns. In the absence of an effective strategy, violent extremist groups like ISIL, al-Qaeda, and their adherents are expanding across the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, including Afghanistan.

After 14 years of fighting in Afghanistan, decisions made in the months ahead will determine whether our sacrifices were worth it. After pulling out of Iraq, against the advice of our military leaders, the President's plan to withdraw from Afghanistan would risk a replay of that failure. We look forward to your views on this policy.

In addition to the so-called Islamic State, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been another main beneficiary of the Middle East descent into chaos. For years, many of us have urged the administration to adopt a regional strategy to counter Iran's malign activities in the Middle East. Unfortunately, that has not happened. Instead, the

administration has too often treated Iran as merely an arms-control challenge rather than the wider geopolitical challenge that it is. Left unchecked, Iran has stepped up its destabilizing activities in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Bahrain, Gaza, and elsewhere. Whatever one thinks of the nuclear agreement, it will not resolve this larger Iran challenge, and will likely make it worse as Iran gains new legitimacy, the lifting of sanctions, and billions of dollars in sanctions relief.

Into the wreckage of our Middle East policy has now stepped Vladimir Putin. As in Ukraine and elsewhere, he perceives the administration's inaction and caution as a weakness, and he is taking advantage. Putin's ongoing military buildup in Syria is the greatest expansion of Russian power in the Middle East in four decades, and it will allow Putin to prop up Assad, play kingmaker in any transition, undermine United States policy and operations, and ultimately prolong this horrific conflict. The main beneficiary will be ISIL.

In classic fashion, the administration first condemned Putin's move, but has now capitulated, agreeing to military-to-military talks. The first step toward a solution is recognizing there's a problem. Unfortunately, that has appeared beyond the capacity of the administration. Instead, they continue to resort to a litany of truisms, strawman arguments, partisan attacks, and talking points that, to borrow a phrase, require, quote, "a willing suspension of disbelief."

In a display of self-delusion that can rival the Bush administration's Iraq policy at its worst, the Obama administration now tells us their strategy is working, that we're making progress, that time is on our side, that strategic patience is all we need, and that we should just stay the course.

When our earlier strategy in Iraq in the broader Middle East was failing, not so long ago, we, thankfully, had leaders, like our distinguished witness, who were willing to face that situation with realism and a President who, to his everlasting credit, took responsibility for that failure and changed course. Other American Presidents, including Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton, have demonstrated a similar capacity for change. There's no reason President Obama could not do the same. No one believes that there are good options. There never are. No one believes that these kinds of problems lend themselves to purely military solutions. They never have and never will. No one expects us to succeed overnight, and no one believes that America can or should solve every problem by itself. But, that does not absolve us of our responsibility to make the situation better, where we can.

Yes, these problems are hard. But, as our witness once said, they are not hopeless. Now more than ever, we need some reasons to be hopeful again.

I thank you for appearing before the committee today, and look forward to your testimony.

Senator Reed.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And, General Petraeus, welcome back to the Armed Services Committee.

This morning's hearing continues the committee's review of the policy issues confronting the United States in the Middle East. And your long experience in a number of leadership positions, both in the United States military and as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, makes you superbly prepared and qualified to provide your perspective on the current situation in the Middle East. And, once again, thank you for being here.

The situation in the Middle East presents a deeply complex problem set, and it is a near certainty that the problems that were there challenge our Nation's security today and for many years to come. And, while our Nation's military is playing a critical role in addressing the threats emanating from the Middle East and lasting solutions will require, in addition, dogged diplomacy and persistent attention by our Nation's civilian and military leaders and those of our allies and partners who share a security interest in the region.

As the committee heard at last week's hearing, the immediate threat confronting the United States, our partners, and allies in the Middle East is ISIL. ISIL's control over portions of Syria and Iraq provides this violent extremist organization a base from which to terrorize civilians and spread its poisonous ideology, regionally and globally. The brutality of ISIL, coupled with that of the Assad regime and other armed elements in Iraq and Syria, has caused a collapse of stability in many areas and forced millions to flee the wanton violence.

The emerging refugee crisis in Europe highlights the urgent need for the international community to focus on restoring security in the region. The United States-led international coalition, enabled by the leadership of retired General John Allen, has brought together 60-plus countries to respond to the ISIL threat, including a multinational air campaign to degrade ISIL's capabilities and programs to train and equip local forces in Iraq and Syria.

General Petraeus, we are very interested in your views on the value of a multilateral approach to confronting ISIL. I would also be interested to hear whether you support the efforts to build and work through local forces on the ground to liberate and then restore stability to areas previously under ISIL control.

In Iraq, United States and partner nations are once again training and equipping Iraqi Security Forces and helping to recruit Sunni tribal forces to the counter-ISIL effort. General Petraeus, given your experience on the ground in Iraq, which is extensive and detailed both as an operational and strategic-level commander, I look forward to hearing your assessment of the broader military campaign, but also on whether the Iraqi Security Forces can summon the will to fight successfully against ISIL and other opponents within Iraq.

Further, the administration has rightly, I believe, conditioned our support to the Iraqi government on their continuing efforts to be more inclusive and responsive to the concerns of the Sunnis, Kurds, moderate Shiites, and minorities. Again, your assessment of these political efforts would be deeply appreciated.

In Syria, according to public reports, the DOD-run train-and-equip program has experienced a variety of setbacks. Many observ-

ers have criticized this program. And again, I would be interested in your assessment of the viability of this program.

At the same time, the already difficult task of restoring security in Syria has only been further complicated by Russian President Putin's recent provocative act of deploying Russian marines and equipment, including fighter aircraft and surface-to-air missiles to Assad-regime-controlled areas under the guise of joining the counter-ISIL effort. What President Putin hopes to gain from this brazen military intervention in this volatile situation is unclear. And we'd, again, like your perspective on that issue.

The other major issue of the United States in the Middle East is Iran. Last well, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, entered the implementation phase. In the coming months, the Iranians have much work to do, and the world will be watching to see whether Iran will discharge its obligations. Holding Iran accountable during this phase of the agreement is, I would suggest, one of the most significant efforts that we can take, along with our allies.

Aside from the JCPOA, General Petraeus, Iran's malign and destabilizing activities are of critical concern. This includes the continued support and financing of the Assad regime, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, Shiite elements in Bahrain, and Shiite militias in Iraq. Countering Iran's malign influence is an area where the administration has made a significant commitment to our partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council, among them an increase in training and exercise programs to ensure these partners have the necessary capabilities to counter Iranian threats. Again, your assessment of these efforts would be appreciated.

While much attention is focused on the Middle East, the United States continues to have nearly 10,000 United States forces deployed in Afghanistan as part of the Resolute Support Mission. A critical decision will have to be made in the next few months regarding the size of United States forces to be retained in Afghanistan during 2016 and beyond. Again, your advice in this respect would also be appreciated.

And lastly, we cannot forget that al-Qaeda, especially its affiliates in Yemen and adherents in Syria, remain a transregional threat to the United States and other interests around the world. Your insights with respect to what might be done to keep the pressure on al-Qaeda, both their senior leadership and their organizational structure, is—would be deeply appreciated.

Once again, thank you for your service—your distinguished service, and thank you for joining us today.

Senator McCAIN. General Petraeus, welcome back.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's good to be back.

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL DAVID H. PETRAEUS, USA (RET.),
FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY;
COMMANDER, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE
FORCE; COMMANDER, UNITED STATES FORCES AFGHANISTAN;
COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND;
AND COMMANDER, MULTI-NATIONAL FORCES-IRAQ**

General PETRAEUS. Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the situation in the Middle East.

As you noted, Mr. Chairman, this is the first time I have testified in open session before Congress since resigning as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) nearly 3 years ago. As such, I think it is appropriate to begin my remarks this morning with an apology, one that I have offered before, but nonetheless, one that I want to repeat to you and to the American public.

Four years ago, I made a serious mistake, one that brought discredit on me, and pain closest—to those closest to me. It was a violation of the trust placed in me and a breach of the values to which I had been committed throughout my life. There's nothing I can do to undo what I did. I can only say again how sorry I am to let—to those I let down, and then strive to go forward with a greater sense of humility and purpose, and with gratitude to those who stood with me during a very difficult chapter in my life.

In light of all that, it means a great deal that you have asked me to share my views on the challenges in the Middle East, where, as you noted, I spent most of my last decade in government. I thank you for that, Mr. Chairman. And I thank you for the support and friendship that you have long extended to me.

The Middle East today is experiencing revolutionary upheaval that is unparalleled in its modern history. At the root of this upheaval is the weakening or disintegration of state authority in multiple countries. This has led to a violent struggle for power across a vast swath of territory, the competition both between different groups within states, and one between different states in the region, and some outside it. Almost every Middle Eastern country is now a battleground or a combatant in one or more wars.

The principal winners, thus far, have been the most ruthless, revolutionary, and anti-American elements in the region. This includes Sunni extremists, like the so-called Islamic State, which is attempting to carve a totalitarian caliphate out of the wreckage of the old order, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which hopes to establish a kind of regional hegemony.

All of the revolutionary forces, whether Sunni or Shi'ite, are exploiting the upheaval in the Middle East while also exacerbating it. While hostile to each other, the growth of each is feeding the sectarian radicalization that is fueling the other. But, none of them reflects the hopes of the overwhelming majority of Middle Easterners.

The crises of the Middle East pose a threat not just to regional stability, but also to global stability and to vital national interests of the United States, for the repercussions of developments in the Middle East extend well beyond it. Indeed, the Middle East is not a part of the world that plays by Las Vegas rules. What happens in the Middle East is not going to stay in the Middle East. We see

this in the global reach of the Islamic State from the sanctuaries it has seized in the region, in the tsunami of refugees fleeing the conflicts of the Middle East, in the danger of a nuclear cascade sparked by Iranian actions, and in the escalating tensions between the United States and Russia over Syria. And it is in the Middle East today where the rules-based international order, the foundation of American security and prosperity since the end of World War II, is most in danger of coming apart at the seams.

International peace and security do not require the United States to solve every crisis or to intervene in every conflict. But, if America is ineffective or absent in the face of the most egregious violations of the most basic principles of the international order that we have championed, our commitment to that order is inevitably questioned and further challenges to it are invited.

I will focus here this morning on three countries at the eye of the present geopolitical storm: Iraq, Syria, and Iran. It has been more than a year since the United States commenced military action against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. And, while there have been significant accomplishments, the progress achieved thus far has been inadequate. An impressive coalition has been established. Key The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) leaders have been killed or captured. And support for local forces in Iraq and Syria has helped roll back ISIS in certain areas. Some elements of the right strategy are in place, but several are under-resourced, while others are missing. We are not where we should be at this point.

In Iraq, we have halted and reversed ISIS's momentum in some areas, but we have seen gains by ISIS in others, such as Ramadi. In my judgment, increased support for the Iraqi Security Forces, Sunni tribal forces, and Kurdish peshmerga is needed, including embedding United States advisor elements down to the brigade headquarters level of those Iraqi forces fighting ISIS.

I also believe that we should explore use of joint tactical air controllers with select Iraqi units to coordinate coalition airstrikes for those units. And we should examine whether our rules of engagement for precision strikes are too restrictive.

That said, we should exercise restraint to ensure our forces do not take over Iraqi units. I would not, for example, embed United States personnel at the Iraqi battalion level, nor would I support clearance operations before a viable hold force is available.

As critical as the front-line fight against ISIS is, however, the center of gravity for the sustainable defeat of ISIS in Iraq lies in Baghdad. In this respect, we should recall that the cause of Iraq's unraveling over the past several years was the corrupt sectarian and authoritarian behavior of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and his government. This is what alienated the Sunni Arab population we worked so hard to get back into the fabric of Iraqi society during the surge. Maliki's actions, in turn, created the conditions for the Islamic State to reconstitute itself in Iraq, after which it gained additional strength in the Syrian civil war and then, of course, swept back into Iraq.

The key now is for the United States to help strengthen those in Baghdad who are prepared to pursue inclusive politics and better governance, goals that unite the majority of Iraq's Shi'ites, Sunni, and Kurds. It is vital that Sunni and Kurds, in particular,

are again given a stake in the success of the new Iraq rather than a stake in its failure.

There is, at present in Iraq, an unprecedented opportunity to support Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who, with the back of Iraqi citizens in the streets, Iraq's senior Shiite cleric, and one Shiite party, is embarked on very serious reforms that are being resisted by the leaders of the major Iranian-supported militias and former Prime Minister Maliki.

The reality, then, is that the challenges in Iraq are neither purely political nor purely military. They are both. What is required, therefore, is an integrated civil-military plan in which diplomatic and military lines of effort are coordinated to reinforce each other. That is what Ambassador Crocker and I pursued during the surge, and all the elements of that effort are once again required, though it is the Iraqis who must provide the ground forces and achieve reconciliation if the results are to be sustainable.

Unfortunately, we do not yet have the proper civil-military architecture in place to support this, though we do appear to be moving closer to it. Notably, the operational headquarters for the military campaign against ISIS in Iraq is based in Kuwait. This means that the United States Ambassador in Baghdad does not always have a day-to-day military counterpart. I would strongly recommend facilitating this by moving key elements of the headquarters to Baghdad and ensuring that a comprehensive civil-military plan is pursued.

I note here that I'm very encouraged that the general selected to lead the campaign in Iraq is the officer who, as a brigade commander in Ramadi in the fall of 2006, launched the reconciliation initiative on which we subsequently built during the surge, leading eventually to what became the Anbar Awakening.

I should also note that, in my view, the commander in Baghdad should focus primarily on Iraq while another commander, perhaps positioned in Turkey, perhaps under the three-star in Iraq, should be designated to focus on operations in Syria which clearly need greater unity of effort.

Let me now turn to the situation in Syria. Syria today, Mr. Chairman, is a geopolitical Chernobyl, spewing instability and extremism over the region and the rest of the world. Like a nuclear disaster, the fallout from the meltdown of Syria threatens to be with us for decades, and the longer it is permitted to continue, the more severe the damage will be.

It is frequently said that there is no military solution to Syria or the other conflicts roiling in the Middle East. This may be true, but it is also misleading. For, in every case, if there is to be any hope of a political settlement, a certain military and security context is required, and that context will not materialize on its own. We and our partners need to facilitate it. And, over the past 4 years, we have not done so.

It has been clear, from early on in Syria, that the desired context requires the development of capable, moderate Sunni Arab ground forces. Such Sunni elements are critical for any objective one might have in Syria: defeating extremists like ISIS, changing the momentum on the battlefield to enable a negotiated settlement, and upholding that agreement while keeping ISIS down. Unfortunately, we are no closer today to having that Sunni force than we were a

year ago or when support for such forces was first considered, several years ago.

The central problem in Syria is that Sunni Arabs will not be willing partners against the Islamic State unless we commit to protect them and the broader Syrian population against all enemies, not just ISIS. That means protecting them from the unrestricted warfare being waged against them by Bashar al-Assad, especially by his air force and its use of barrel bombs. This, not ISIS, has been the primary source of civilian casualties. It has also been a principal driver of the radicalization fueling ISIS and the refugee crisis.

The problems in Syria cannot be quickly resolved, but there are actions the United States, and only the United States, can take that would make a difference. We could, for example, tell Assad that the use of barrel bombs must end and that if they continue, we will stop the Syrian Air Force from flying. We have that capability. This would not end the humanitarian crisis in Syria or end the broader war or bring about the collapse of the Assad regime, but it would remove a particularly vicious weapon from Assad's arsenal. It would demonstrate that the United States is willing to stand against Assad. And it would show the Syrian people that we can do what the Islamic State cannot: provide them with a measure of protection.

I would also support the establishment of enclaves in Syria, protected by coalition airpower, where a moderate Sunni force could be supported and where additional forces could be trained, internally displaced persons could find refuge, and the Syrian opposition could organize.

Now, no one is more conscious of the costs of military intervention or of the limits of our military power than I am. As Commander in Iraq and then Afghanistan during the height of combat in those countries, I wrote more letters of condolence to parents of America's sons and daughters than any of my contemporaries. I do not make recommendations for any kind of military action lightly.

But, inaction can also carry profound risks and costs for our national security. We see that clearly today in Syria. And Russia's recent military escalation in Syria is a further reminder that, when the United States does not take the initiative, others will fill the vacuum, often in ways that are harmful to our interests.

Russia's actions to bolster Assad increase the imperative of support for the moderate opposition and Syrian civilians. We should not allow Russia to push us into coalition with Assad, which appears to be President Putin's intention. While we should not rush to oust Assad without an understanding of what will follow him, Assad cannot be part of the solution in Syria. He is, after all, the individual seen by Sunnis across the region as responsible for the deaths of some 250,000 Syrians, the displacement of well over a third of Syria's population, and the destruction of many of Syria's once thriving communities.

Finally, let me turn to Iran. The nuclear agreement negotiated by the Obama administration contains many positive elements. It also contains problematic elements. Over the next 10 to 15 years, the agreement will impose meaningful constraints on Iran's nuclear activities. It will also, however, increase considerably the resources available for the Iranian regime to pursue malign activities. And,

in the longer term, as constraints imposed by the agreement expire, the risk of Iranian proliferation will increase.

The key question, going forward, is, What will be the relationship of the United States to Iranian power? Will we seek to counter it or to accommodate it? As the Obama administration sought to promote the nuclear agreement, its senior members pledged the former: to counter malign Iranian activity. But, many in the region worry that the White House will now pursue the latter, attempting to work with Iran, perhaps beginning with Syria. This would be a mistake. To be sure, the idea of reconciliation with Iran should not be dismissed. But, it is one thing if reconciliation means that Iran abandons its Quds Force-driven foreign policy, sponsorship of extremist proxies, and pursuit of hegemony over its neighbors. It is a very different matter if reconciliation entails accommodating those actions.

As we have seen in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, Iran's activities are not only hostile to us and our partners, they also exacerbate Sunni feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement, which, in turn, drive sectarian radicalization and the growth of groups like ISIS. Thus, rather than viewing the nuclear agreement as marking the end of a hostile relationship with Iran that will enable our disengagement from the Middle East, we should see it as inaugurating a new, more complex phase of that competition that will require intensified United States involvement in the region. This should include several important actions:

First, the United States should make absolutely clear that we will never allow Iran to possess highly enriched uranium and that any move in that direction will be met with military force. This guarantee must be ironclad to reassure our partners in the region and have the desired effect with Iran. Such a declaration would carry maximal credibility if issued by the President and Congress, together.

Second, we must intensify our work with our Arab and Israeli partners to counter Iran's malign regional activities. This can take several forms, including continued use of existing sanctions authorities against Iranian entities tied to terrorism, ballistic missile development, and human rights abuses. It should also include expedited approval of weapon systems sought by our partners in the region and greater integration of their capabilities. And it should encompass additional actions to demonstrate that the theater remains set with respect to our capabilities to carry out military operations against Iran's nuclear program, if necessary.

Beyond these actions, we should understand that the most immediate test for the credibility of our policy will be what we do in Iraq and Syria. The outcome in those countries will be the basis for the judgments of friend and foe alike about our steadfastness and competence in thwarting ISIS, other extremists, and Iran's quest for hegemony.

Mr. Chairman, the situation confronting the United States in the Middle East today is very hard, but, as I observed and as you recalled, when I took command in Iraq in early February 2007 amidst terrible sectarian violence, "hard" is not "hopeless." As complex and challenging as the crises in the region are, I'm convinced

the United States is capable of rising to the challenge if we choose to do so.

I ended my statements before the Senate Armed Services Committee in the past by thanking its members for their steadfast support of our men and women in uniform. I will end my statement this morning the same way, repeating the gratitude that so many of us felt during the height of our engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan, for the committee's extraordinary support for so many critical initiatives on and off the battlefield, even when a number of members questioned the policies we were executing.

This committee has also long played a critical oversight role poising tough questions about U.S. policy and strategy. I highlight the leadership of Chairman McCain in this regard for questioning the strategy in Iraq before 2007 and calling for many of the key elements that ultimately made possible the stabilization of that country. The questions that members of this committee ask about our approach in Syria and the broader fight against ISIS continue in this tradition.

Again, this committee's unwavering support of those serving our Nation in uniform has meant a tremendous amount to those on the battlefield and to those supporting them. And it is with those great Americans in mind that I have offered my thoughts here this morning.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of General Petraeus follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL DAVID H. PETRAEUS, U.S. ARMY (RET.)

Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed, Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to discuss the situation in the Middle East.

This is the first time I have testified in open session before Congress since resigning as Director of the CIA nearly three years ago. And I think it is appropriate to begin my remarks this morning with an apology . . . one that I have offered before, but nonetheless one that I want to repeat to you and to the American people.

Four years ago, I made a serious mistake—one that brought discredit on me and pain to those closest to me. It was a violation of the trust placed in me and a breach of the values to which I had been committed throughout my life.

There is nothing I can do to undo what I did. I can only say again how sorry I am to those I let down, and then strive to go forward with a greater sense of humility and purpose, and with gratitude to those who stood with me during a very difficult chapter in my life.

In light of all that, it means a great deal that you have asked me to share my views on the challenges in the Middle East, where I spent most of my last decade in government.

I thank you for that, Mr. Chairman, and I thank you for the support and friendship that you have long extended to me.

The Middle East today is experiencing revolutionary upheaval that is unparalleled in its modern history.

At the root of this upheaval is the weakening or disintegration of state authority in multiple countries. This has led to a violent struggle for power across a vast swath of territory—a competition both between different groups *within* states, and one *between* different states in the region and some outside it. Almost every Middle Eastern country is now a battleground or a combatant in one or more wars.

The principal winners, thus far, have been the most ruthless, revolutionary, and anti-American elements in the region. This includes Sunni extremists like the so-called Islamic State, which is attempting to carve a totalitarian caliphate out of the wreckage of the old order, and the Islamic Republic of Iran, which hopes to establish a kind of regional hegemony.

All of the revolutionary forces—whether Sunni or Shiite—are *exploiting* the upheaval in the Middle East while also *exacerbating* it. While hostile to each other,

the growth of each is feeding the sectarian radicalization that is fueling the other. But none of them reflects the hopes of the overwhelming majority of Middle Easterners.

The crises of the Middle East pose a threat not just to regional stability, but also to global stability and to vital national interests of the United States, for the repercussions of developments in the Middle East extend well beyond it.

Indeed, the Middle East is not a part of the world that plays by Las Vegas rules: what happens in the Middle East is not going to stay in the Middle East.

We see this in the global reach of the Islamic State from the sanctuaries it has seized in the region; in the tsunami of refugees fleeing the conflicts of the Middle East; in the danger of a nuclear cascade sparked by Iranian actions; and in the escalating tensions between the United States and Russia over Syria.

And, it is in the Middle East today where the rules-based international order—the foundation of American security and prosperity since the end of World War II—is most in danger of coming apart at the seams.

International peace and security do not require the United States to solve every crisis or to intervene in every conflict. But if America is ineffective or absent in the face of the most *egregious* violations of the most *basic* principles of the international order that we have championed, our commitment to that order is inevitably questioned . . . and further challenges to it are invited.

I will focus here this morning on three countries at the eye of the present geopolitical storm: Iraq, Syria, and Iran.

It has been more than a year since the United States commenced military action against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. And, while there have been significant accomplishments, the progress achieved thus far has been inadequate. An impressive coalition has been assembled, key ISIS leaders have been killed or captured, and support for local forces in Iraq and Syria has helped roll back ISIS in certain areas. Some elements of the right strategy are in place, but several are under-resourced, while others are missing. We are not where we should be at this point.

In *Iraq*, we have halted and reversed ISIS's momentum in some areas. But we have seen gains by ISIS in others, such as Ramadi. In my judgment, increased support for the Iraqi Security Forces, Sunni tribal forces, and Kurdish peshmerga is needed—including embedding United States advisor elements down to the brigade headquarters level of those Iraqi forces fighting ISIS. I also believe that we should explore use of Joint Tactical Air Controllers with select Iraqi units to coordinate coalition airstrikes for those units. And we should examine whether our rules of engagement for precision strikes are too restrictive.

That said, we should exercise restraint to ensure our forces do not take over Iraqi units. I would not, for example, embed United States personnel at the Iraqi battalion level; nor would I support clearance operations before a viable hold force is available.

As critical as the frontline fight against ISIS is, however, the center of gravity for the *sustainable* defeat of ISIS in Iraq lies in Baghdad.

In this respect, we should recall that the cause of Iraq's unraveling over the past several years was the corrupt, sectarian, and authoritarian behavior of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and his government. This is what alienated the Sunni Arab population we worked so hard to get back into the fabric of Iraqi society during the Surge. Maliki's actions, in turn, created the conditions for the Islamic State to reconstitute itself in Iraq, after which it gained additional strength in the Syrian civil war and then, of course, swept back into Iraq.

The key now is for the United States to help strengthen those in Baghdad who are prepared to pursue inclusive politics and better governance—goals that unite Iraq's Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds. It is vital that Sunnis and Kurds, in particular, are again given a stake in the success of the new Iraq, rather than a stake in its failure.

There is, at present in Iraq, an unprecedented opportunity to support Prime Minister Abadi who, with the backing of Iraqi citizens in the streets, Iraq's senior Shia cleric, and the Shia ISCI party, is embarked on very serious reforms that are being resisted by the leaders of the major Iranian-supported militias and former Prime Minister Maliki.

The reality is that the challenges in Iraq are neither *purely* political nor *purely* military. They are both. What is required therefore is an integrated civil-military plan, in which diplomatic and military lines of effort are coordinated to reinforce each other. That is what Ambassador Crocker and I pursued during the Surge, and all the elements of that effort are once again required, though it is the Iraqis who must provide the ground forces and achieve reconciliation if the results are to be sustainable.

Unfortunately, we do not yet have the proper civil-military architecture in place to support this, though we appear to be moving closer to it.

Notably, the operational headquarters for the military campaign against ISIS in Iraq is based in Kuwait. This means that the United States Ambassador in Baghdad does not always have a day-to-day military counterpart. I would strongly recommend facilitating this by moving key elements of the headquarters to Baghdad—and ensuring that a comprehensive civil-military plan is pursued.

I note here that I am very encouraged that the general selected to lead the campaign in Iraq is the officer who, as a brigade commander in Ramadi in the fall of 2006, launched the reconciliation initiative on which we subsequently built during the Surge, leading eventually to what became the Anbar Awakening.

I should also note that, in my view, the commander in Baghdad should focus primarily on Iraq, while another commander, perhaps positioned in Turkey and perhaps under the three-star in Iraq, should be designated to focus on operations in Syria, which clearly need greater unity of effort.

Let me now turn to the situation in **Syria**.

Syria today, Mr. Chairman, is a geopolitical Chernobyl—spewing instability and extremism over the region and the rest of the world. Like a nuclear disaster, the fallout from the meltdown of Syria threatens to be with us for decades, and the longer it is permitted to continue, the more severe the damage will be.

It is frequently said that there is “no military solution” to Syria or the other conflicts roiling the Middle East. This may be true, but it is also misleading. For, in every case, if there is to be any hope of a political settlement, a certain military and security *context* is required—and that context will not materialize on its own. We and our partners need to facilitate it—and over the past four years, we have not done so.

It has been clear from early on in Syria that the desired context requires the development of capable, moderate Sunni Arab ground forces. Such Sunni elements are critical for *any* objective one might have in Syria: defeating extremists like ISIS, changing the momentum on the battlefield to enable a negotiated settlement, and upholding that agreement while keeping ISIS down.

Unfortunately, we are no closer today to having that Sunni force than we were a year ago—or when support for such forces was first considered several years ago.

The central problem in Syria is that Sunni Arabs will not be willing partners against the Islamic State unless we commit to protect them and the broader Syrian population against *all* enemies, not just ISIS. That means protecting them from the unrestricted warfare being waged against them by Bashar al-Assad—especially by his air force and its use of barrel bombs. This, not ISIS, has been the primary source of civilian casualties; it has also been a principal driver of the radicalization fueling ISIS and the refugee crisis.

The problems in Syria cannot be quickly resolved. But there are actions the United States, and only the United States, can take that would make a difference.

We could, for example, tell Assad that the use of barrel bombs must end—and that if they continue, we will stop the Syrian air force from flying. We have that capability.

This would not end the humanitarian crisis in Syria, or end the broader war, or bring about the collapse of the Assad regime. But it would remove a particularly vicious weapon from Assad’s arsenal. It would demonstrate that the United States is willing to stand against Assad. And it would show the Syrian people that we can do what the Islamic State cannot—provide them with a measure of protection.

I would also support the establishment of enclaves in Syria protected by coalition airpower, where a moderate Sunni force could be supported and where additional forces could be trained, Internally Displaced Persons could find refuge, and the Syrian opposition could organize.

Now, no one is more conscious of the costs of military intervention, or of the limits of our military power, than I am. As commander in Iraq and then Afghanistan during the height of combat in those countries, I wrote more letters of condolence to parents of America’s sons and daughters than any of my contemporaries. I do not make recommendations for any kind of military action lightly.

But inaction can also carry profound risks and costs for our national security. We see that clearly today in Syria. And Russia’s recent military escalation in Syria is a further reminder that, when the United States does not take the initiative, others will fill the vacuum, often in ways that are harmful to our interests.

Russia’s actions to bolster Assad increase the imperative of support for the moderate opposition and Syrian civilians. We should not allow Russia to push us into coalition with Assad, which appears to be President Putin’s intention. While we should not rush to oust Assad without an understanding of what will follow him, Assad cannot be part of the solution in Syria. He is, after all, the individual seen

by Sunnis across the region as responsible for the death of some 250,000 Syrians, the displacement of well over a third of Syria's population, and the destruction of many of Syria's once thriving communities.

Finally, let me turn to *Iran*.

The nuclear agreement negotiated by the Obama Administration contains many positive elements; it also contains problematic elements.

Over the next 10–15 years, the agreement will impose meaningful constraints on Iran's nuclear activities. It will also, however, increase considerably the resources available for the Iranian regime to pursue malign activities. And, in the longer term, as constraints imposed by the agreement expire, the risk of Iranian proliferation will increase.

The key question, going forward, is: What will be the relationship of the United States to Iranian power? Will we seek to counter it, or to accommodate it?

As the Obama Administration sought to promote the nuclear agreement, its senior members pledged the former, to counter malign Iranian activity. But many in the region worry that the White House will now pursue the latter—attempting to work with Iran, perhaps beginning in Syria.

This would be a mistake. To be sure, the idea of reconciliation with Iran should not be dismissed. But it is one thing if reconciliation means that Iran abandons its Qods Force-driven foreign policy, sponsorship of extremist proxies, and pursuit of hegemony over its neighbors. It is a very different matter if reconciliation entails accommodating these actions.

As we have seen in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, Iran's activities are not only hostile to us and our partners. They also exacerbate Sunni feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement, which in turn drive sectarian radicalization and the growth of groups like ISIS.

Thus, rather than viewing the nuclear agreement as marking the end of a hostile relationship with Iran that will enable our disengagement from the Middle East, we should see it as inaugurating a new, more complex phase of that competition that will require intensified United States involvement in the region.

This should include several important actions.

First, the United States should make absolutely clear that we will never allow Iran to possess highly enriched uranium, and that any move in that direction will be met with military force. This guarantee must be ironclad to reassure our partners in the region and have the desired effect with Iran. Such a declaration would carry maximal credibility if issued by the President and Congress together.

Second, we must intensify our work with our Arab and Israeli partners to counter Iran's malign regional activities. This can take several forms, including continued use of existing sanctions authorities against Iranian entities tied to terrorism, ballistic missile development, and human rights abuses. It should also include expedited approval of weapons systems sought by our partners in the region and greater integration of their capabilities. And it should encompass additional actions to demonstrate that the theater remains "set" with respect to our own capabilities to carry out military operations against Iran's nuclear program, if necessary.

Beyond those actions, we should understand that the most immediate test for the credibility of our policy will be what we do in Iraq and Syria. The outcome in those countries will be the basis for the judgments of friend and foe alike about our steadfastness and competence in thwarting ISIS, other extremists, and Iran's quest for hegemony.

Mr. Chairman, the situation confronting the United States in the Middle East today is very hard. But as I observed when I took command in Iraq in early February 2007 amidst terrible sectarian violence, hard is not hopeless. As complex and challenging as the crises in the region are, I am convinced the United States is capable of rising to the challenge—if we choose to do so.

I ended my statements before the Senate Armed Services Committee in the past by thanking its Members for their steadfast support of our men and women in uniform. I will end my statement this morning the same way—repeating the gratitude that so many of us felt during the height of our engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan for the Committee's extraordinary support for so many critical initiatives, on and off the battlefield, even when a number of Members questioned the policies we were executing.

This Committee has also long played a critical oversight role, posing tough questions about U.S. policy and strategy. I highlight the leadership of Chairman McCain in this regard for questioning the strategy in Iraq before 2007 and calling for many of the key elements that ultimately made possible the stabilization of that country. The questions that Members of this Committee ask about our approach in Syria and the broader fight against ISIS continue in this tradition.

Again, this Committee's unwavering support of those serving our Nation in uniform has meant a tremendous amount to those on the battlefield and to those supporting them. And it is with those great Americans in mind that I have offered my thoughts here this morning. Thank you very much.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you very much, General. And thank you for probably the most comprehensive overview that this committee has received on the situation. I'm very grateful.

And I would mention, perhaps one of the most admirable and important part of my experience was watching your leadership, not only in the architect of the surge, but your motivation of the young men and women who are serving in the military as officers and enlisted. Your inspirational leadership to them was something which I will always remember with great admiration.

You called for, in your statement, what some of us have been asking for, for years, and that is, the barrel bombs have got to end. It's not ISIS that's dropping the barrel bombs. And when my colleagues say ISIS is the problem, they're not the ones that have killed 230,000 of their countrymen. It's Bashar Assad. And let's—and we should own up to that. And some kind of accommodation with Bashar Assad, of course, would fly in the face of everything that the United States of America has ever stood for.

So, you are calling for, in your statement, that we tell Bashar Assad to stop the barrel bombs and establish an enclave where people could take refuge, could have protection from the incredible, insane cruelties of Bashar Assad. There's going to be blowback on that. "Well, doesn't that mean that we're going to have to have American boots on the ground? Doesn't that mean we're back in the quagmire? Doesn't that mean?"—I can see the reaction now from some of my friends who—by the way, the same ones that oppose the surge when they're around. But, what's your response to that, General Petraeus, that this would then cause us to be involved with boots on the ground and the—back into the quagmire that characterized our involvement prior to the surge?

General PETRAEUS. Well, a couple of points, if I could, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I think very important to underscore the fact that Bashar al-Assad can't be part of the longrun solution in Syria. He is, as you noted, as I noted, the individual held responsible for well over 200,000, and perhaps as high as 250,000, Syrians dead, and he cannot—he is the magnetic attraction that is bringing jihadis to Syria to fight him. And, indeed—

Senator MCCAIN. And—

General PETRAEUS.—if we are to support a force, it won't work for us, it won't be supportable if we don't support it against Bashar al-Assad's actions against it, the most horrific of which are the dropping of barrel bombs. And that can be stopped. We have the capability to do that. We don't have to put 165,000 troops on the ground to do that. We don't have to put any boots on the ground to do that, although I think, at some point in an enclave, we should not be closed to the possibility of some advisors or support elements being in something like that, in the same way that we have them on the ground in Iraq. So, I don't see this as the—entering a quagmire. I see this as taking out the most horrific casualty-producing item.

I think General Allen has said that well over 50 percent of the casualties overall in Syria have been caused by these indiscriminate barrel bombs that can, at a moment's notice, drop from the sky. We have the capability to stop that. And we should.

Senator MCCAIN. Speaking of Russia, I noted that the Russians have now—have aircraft that are primarily as interceptors, not close air support. ISIS doesn't have an air force. It's very interesting. And what is your assessment of what Vladimir Putin is trying to accomplish with this incredible buildup in Syria? And what should the United States do in response?

General PETRAEUS. Well, first of all, I think you have to look at this, writ large. I think that what Vladimir Putin would like to do is resurrect the Russian Empire. You see this in a variety of different activities. Or at least the Soviet Union. He has a number of different activities—diplomatic, economic, and, of course, military—in a variety of countries around Russia. And now he is, of course, in Syria, as well, and trying to revive Russian relationships with countries in the Middle East.

I think the immediate objective that he has in Syria is to solidify the corridor on the Mediterranean coast between Latakia, where he has his airbase, and Tartus, where they have the Russian naval base, the only naval base left in the Mediterranean. Clearly, he would like to shore up his ally, Bashar al-Assad. At the very least, he wants to make sure that Bashar is not thrown under the bus by either other regime members or perhaps even Iran until at least he has some better sense of the way forward. His objective is to keep that naval base, and indeed to keep the airbase that is also useful for solidifying it in that corridor. I would think, beyond that, he wants to help Bashar solidify his grip, which has been challenged increasingly in recent months by ISIS and then by other opposition forces, as well, that runs from the coast to Holmes and then down to Damascus and so that he can at least keep a rump Syrian state.

But, again, as I said, Assad cannot be part of the longrun solution. But, as I also said, we should not be quick to oust Assad until we have some sense of what will follow him.

Senator MCCAIN. So, the United States, in the short term, should do what in regards to this—in response to this significant military buildup?

General PETRAEUS. Well, the first is, we should not go in league with this, we should not think that we should—we can partner with Russia and Iran and Bashar al-Assad against ISIS. Again, if Russia wanted to fight ISIS, they could have joined the 60-plus-member coalition that General Allen has so capably put together, and helped drop bombs on ISIS. They have some capabilities that would be useful to that fight. So, this is clearly not what they're up to. And we have to be very clear in our resolve to ensure that we deter action by Russia that would involve any of the forces we're supporting and certainly anything that we're doing in that region, and show firmly, not provocatively, that we will not accept that.

I might add that this also extends, of course, to what's going on in Ukraine. I was there a week or so ago. The good news is that the violence is down somewhat in the east, probably because Putin

is going to the United Nations (U.N.) General Assembly, then has another negotiating round and would like to get out from underneath the sanctions that are so crippling.

I might note that I think that Putin is not playing the strongest hand in the world, although he's playing his hand, tactically, quite effectively. But, at the end of the day, Vladimir Putin is going to run out of foreign reserves. He's probably got 200 billion or so left. He will burn through those in the course of the next 2 years. And if the sanctions are still imposed at that time, he and the companies that have debt coming due—he running a very large fiscal deficit—are not going to be able to go to the world markets and get money to finance their government operations. So, I think he has, actually, a limited window of a couple of years to continue provocative actions in Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Syria, Georgia, and so forth. And we have to be very careful during this time, when he could actually lash out and be even more dangerous than he has been.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, I think, for calling this very important hearing.

And, General, thank you for your very incisive and extraordinarily erudite treatment of these complex issues. It's been very helpful.

Just want to sort of go back to the point that you made. Long term, Assad cannot be the future of Syria.

General PETRAEUS. Correct.

Senator REED. But, short term, you acknowledge that there has to be some recognition of what the following on——

General PETRAEUS. Absolutely.

Senator REED.—would be.

General PETRAEUS. Sure. I mean, Syria could actually get worse.

Senator REED. Right.

General PETRAEUS. And we——

Senator REED. Now, the——

General PETRAEUS. It's hard to believe that, but it could get worse.

Senator REED. Does that in some way imply that, for at least the temporary expedient measure, we would have to work with Assad, with the Russians, et cetera, to create a transition? You know, your—you seem to pose this dilemma as, "He can't go until we know what's following him. But, he can't stay forever. But, we don't know"——

General PETRAEUS. Right.

Senator REED.—"where to move."

General PETRAEUS. Sure.

Senator REED. I think that's a key——

General PETRAEUS. I——

Senator REED.—to the question.

General PETRAEUS. I think actually being seen to work with Assad would unravel our relationships with our Sunni partners in the region. And I think it's, therefore, not something we can do.

Having said that, what we can do is ensure that we don't launch an offensive or support an offensive by opposition forces that could

precipitate his departure before, again, there is some sense of what will follow.

As I mentioned, again, this Sunni Arab force that we need to support is essential not just to fight ISIS. It's essential to create—

Senator REED. Right.

General PETRAEUS.—the context within which you might actually get a political agreement. And that context is not there right now.

Senator REED. So, essentially what your advice would be is that this Sunni opposition force, composed of a whole range of elements with different political philosophies, if it put sufficient pressure on Assad, could force him to leave. Is that the solution?

General PETRAEUS. Well, but—well, I don't know about "force him to leave." Again, they can force a negotiated settlement, out of which, I would think, there will come something that will not include Assad.

Senator REED. Well, let me ask—

General PETRAEUS. Again, I don't see how he's possibly part of the longrun—

Senator REED.—let me ask—again, I think you have—because of your insights, you have continually revealed the complexity of this issue, and let's—if we could pursue it—who's going to do the negotiations if we're looking for a negotiated agreement?

General PETRAEUS. Well, there is the U.N.'s Special Representative of the Secretary General. He happens to be the same individual, Staffan de Mistura, who was the SRSG in—

Senator REED. Iraq.

General PETRAEUS.—Iraq during the surge, as you'll recall.

Senator REED. Yeah.

General PETRAEUS. And, candidly, I played a role in persuading him to do the same position in Afghanistan, where he was also highly capable. So, he—we have—there is a—~~an~~ extant process. I actually am seeing him on Sunday in New York, just purely coincidentally.

Senator REED. So, you know, in a practical sense, we should begin to energize this U.N. process as—

General PETRAEUS. We—

Senator REED.—an effective means to create at least a forum for negotiations—

General PETRAEUS. Correct. Now—

Senator REED.—without embracing—

General PETRAEUS.—I mean, this does exist. It's been—it's had—been halting, to put a happy face on it, but it does exist, and it is something on which we could build, again, as there is a sense of the context developing, where those in Damascus are going to realize that perhaps it's time to cut a deal, and those who are supporting Damascus in Tehran and now—

Senator REED. Right.

General PETRAEUS.—in Moscow.

Senator REED. Let me—you, early on, were advocating a train-and-equip program for Syria, to get effective counter-ISIL and counter—at least counter-ISIL forces on the ground. Now, what can we do to revitalize that effort? Is it possible to revitalize it, to be very—

General PETRAEUS. I think it is. Frankly, again, it has to. If we cannot do this, we aren't going to defeat the Islamic State. We've done a great deal with the Syrian Kurds.

Senator REED. Yeah.

General PETRAEUS. But, you can't push Kurds, there or in Iraq, farther than the areas that they can hold with legitimacy. So, you can't push them all the way, I don't think, to take out the capital of the Islamic State, for example, and expect them to hold that. It's not their traditional territory. And the same is true in Iraq. Those who say, "Well, just keep pushing the peshmerga further." The peshmerga shouldn't go further. Masuhd Barzani knows that. I have heard that. And there's recognition that that shouldn't go. So, again, in Iraq there also has to be the development of this force. And that is moving along.

I think, actually, the pieces are in place if we will resource them and actually make a critical policy decision. And I think that's the critical element for a Sunni force in Syria. They are not going to be willing to be supported by us if we're not going to support them when they're under attack by Bashar as well as when they're under attack by ISIS. Oh, by the way, for that matter, Jabhat al-Nusra, the Khorasan Group, or some others.

Senator REED. So, you think the—it's been a long and winding road, but it can be done, putting in the field indigenous forces, Syrian forces, et cetera. And the key policy decision is that they would be protected against any foe that—

General PETRAEUS. Indeed. And taken down the barrel bombs. If the barrel bombs continue, then the air force goes down.

Beyond that, I think we're going to have to support some forces that will not have gone all the way through our train-and-equip program. Again, I think pushing everybody through that is not necessarily the solution for ramping up.

Senator REED. If the President—if the Chairman would indulge—one of the approaches to taking down the barrel bomb is eliminating the airfields, although some of these can be dropped by helicopters, so that makes it very difficult. But, the other is to destroy the aircraft, et cetera. Is there any sort of—that runs the risk, obviously, of some response—if not by the Syrians, some response by even in the Russians, at least protesting.

General PETRAEUS. Well, there was a—it was publicly reported that, had we taken out the chemical systems in the redline issue, that a lot of that would have been done, if not all of it, by sea- and air-launched cruise—

Senator REED. Right.

General PETRAEUS.—missiles and a variety of other. So, you don't even have to fly in the airspace, necessarily. The fact is, we're already in Syrian airspace. We're flying over it all the time. We've already put boots on the ground in Syria, special mission-unit boots. So, we have the capability to do a great deal, and I think we know how to do it capably and without undue risk.

Senator REED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm—I agree with Senator McCain when he said that it's refreshing to get a very succinct presentation, breaking it out—Iran, Iraq, Syria. And you've—you have certainly done that, and I appreciate it very much.

General PETRAEUS. Yes, sir.

Senator INHOFE. One thing we haven't talked about very much is the refugee situation. And it's been our feeling, or at least my feeling for a long time, that until such time as we develop a strategy in the Middle East, that it's going to be very difficult to address this. It's also, as you pointed out, become more severe if we don't.

In January, General Mattis testified before this group. He said, quote, "We have many potential allies around the world in the Middle East who have rallied to us, but we have not been clear about where we stand in defining or dealing with the growing violent jihadist terrorist threat." He's saying the same thing. We don't have a specific strategy there.

Dr. Kissinger stated before this committee, "The role of the United States is indispensable. It's time for a global upheaval. And the consequences of American disengagement magnifies and requires larger intervention later."

First of all, I'd ask, Do you agree with these assessments?

General PETRAEUS. I do. Yes.

Senator INHOFE. You know, I'm embarrassed to say that if we have a strategy in the Middle East and dealing with specifically these countries and others, I don't know what it is, because we've been waiting for that strategy. And it seems to me that you're not going to resolve the refugee problem, that's a very real one—here we are, expanding the numbers that we would be willing to accept. And that's just a drop in the bucket when you look at 4 million that are out there, plus another 8 million that have been displaced within—are still in Syria. So, until that time, I don't think that's going to resolve the problem. Would you have a specific explanation of the strategy of the administration in the Middle East, affecting the whole Middle East along with the Syria, Iran, and Iran? Do you know what that is?

General PETRAEUS. I'll defer to the administration for that.

Senator INHOFE. Well, I've been deferring to the administration for that, also, and we still don't have it.

The—you mentioned Ukraine. I know this is supposed to be the Middle East subject, but I happened to be there right after the Ukrainian elections, with Poroshenko, with Yatsenyuk, the Prime Minister, and how proud they were, and how committed they were to us, that they, for the first time in 96 years, don't have one Communist on their—in their Parliament. And then immediately—of course, the—Putin started invading, sending troops in, sending equipment in. Very similar to what's happening in Syria. Now, you did respond to what they're trying to, I guess, do with their military buildup in Syria. Is there anything you would like to add to that, in terms of what their end game is, what they're trying to accomplish with that?

General PETRAEUS. Let me go back to Ukraine, if I could, actually, because I think—

Senator INHOFE. Sure.

General PETRAEUS.—what Putin wants in Ukraine is to ensure that the—that Ukraine does not succeed. His worst nightmare would be a thriving, vibrant, prosperous democracy with free-market economy on his western border. He knows—he can look at Poland and see what’s—what happened in the 20 years since—Poland and Ukraine had roughly the same—

Senator INHOFE. That’s right.

General PETRAEUS.—per capita gross domestic product (GDP). Poland is twice as much now. Ukraine is still mired where they were. So, he’s going to do everything he can, not only now that the conflict seems to be freezing, to keep it bubbling, but what he really wants to do is, again, ensure that there is failure in Ukraine. And, in that regard, the future of Ukraine is going to be determined in Kiev, not out in the Donbass.

Senator INHOFE. Yeah.

General PETRAEUS. And there are concerns about political infighting and so forth. And the Ukrainian leaders have got to pull together and get the politics right, just the way, by the way, Iraqi leaders have got to pull together, because the center of gravity, as I mentioned, of the fight in Iraq is actually not on the front lines. As important as fighting on the front lines is, and pushing back ISIS and out of Ramadi and out of Mosul and so forth, the future of Iraq is going to be determined by politics in Baghdad. And, as I mentioned, we have a unique opportunity right now to support the Prime Minister of Baghdad, who is, a year into the job, pursuing very aggressive reforms. He’s done away with the vice presidencies, the deputy prime ministers, eight ministries, and is now asking for examination of the activities of the chief justice, somebody who was actually a solid, reasonable chief justice during the surge and a few years after that, but then increasingly became used, I think, is an accurate description, by Prime Minister Maliki to go after the senior Sunni Arab politicians and to support other activities that ultimately alienated the Sunni population and undid what we achieved during the surge.

Senator INHOFE. But—General Petraeus, my time is expired, but here’s what I’d like to do. I’d like to have you answer, for the record—I go back to Oklahoma, and I talk to people, and they contend, and I do, too, that we’re over-complicating this deal that we have proposed with Iran, and that you don’t really need to go beyond the fact that, as our—Ronald Reagan used to say, verify. Verification is important. I don’t think verification is there. So, I’d like to have you analyze just that part of this proposed deal. If we have something that can go as long as 54 days before going in to find out whether or not Iran is developing some of the things that we think they are, I’d like to know how that is—verification plays into this, if you’d do that for me.

General PETRAEUS. Sure.

[The information referred to follows:]

General Petraeus did not respond in time for printing. When received, information will be retained in the committee files.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Nelson.

Senator NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, thank you for your service.

Characterize, if you would, on the solution that follows Assad in order to get there. How could we interact with Russia, in the U.N. context, in order to bring about a political solution?

General PETRAEUS. Well, first of all, I think it's just important to acknowledge that there are various potential options for Syria. One could be, you could put the whole country back together again and have a multiethnic, multisectarian, pluralist democracy—I find that probably remote, in terms of possibilities—all the way to acknowledging that we can't put Humpty Dumpty back together again and there will be a number of states carved out of the old Syria, perhaps a Sunnistan, a Shiite-Alawite-stan, and Kurdistan. Perhaps more than one. But, again, none of this is going to happen. They're not going to have negotiations, certainly unless the individual most responsible for this civil war, Bashar al-Assad, and his regime feel that they are threatened and that their survival is in question.

I think if you can get to that point, then you might have the leverage to conduct negotiations, in which case we would expect that Russia would be on the side of keeping a favorable regime to them, because, again, their overriding national interest in this case, beyond President Putin striding the world stage again, as he did to provide the way out of the chemical weapons conundrum, is to maintain the seaport that he has at Tartus, and the airbase in that corridor that connects them on the Mediterranean coast.

Senator NELSON. In your opinion, are we not getting close to that point, where Assad feels completely threatened?

General PETRAEUS. I think probably the Russian intervention gives him a degree of new hope. I think he has been losing recently, gradually, steadily over the course of recent years—or a sense that he might not be able to continue the fight. But, of course, progressively what has happened over the years has been that, first, Quds Force advisors entered to help, Iran bankrolled and provided equipment and so forth, Russia's provided some of that, and then Lebanese Hezbollah entered the fray on the side of Syria, as well. There are also reports of various Shiite militias from neighboring countries fighting on his behalf. And certainly the support from Russia, especially if it includes a considerable amount of military hardware, will bolster him further.

Senator NELSON. Turning to Iran and the agreement, I read your op-ed with Ambassador Ross, and I find it very compelling. There are a lot of conclusions that the two of you drew that I had drawn, as well, in determining how I was going to vote. And that was that, in the short term, it certainly is, in my judgment and apparently what you articulated, in the interest of the United States with the agreement, but, in the long term—and you speak in terms of 10-15 years down the road. Do you want to expand, then, on your idea? And I'll quote from your op-ed. "In other words, deterrence is the key to ensuring not just that the Iranians live up to the agreement, but also to preventing them from developing nuclear weapons."

General PETRAEUS. Absolutely. And not only that, deterring, if you will, or dissuading or persuading, countries in the region that they don't need to go to that similar point that Iran is, or will be at the 15 year mark and perhaps beyond, because then we're going

to have a real threat to the proliferation regime that is in place—the nonproliferation regime.

So, again, the key element here is an ironclad United States position—again, ideally from both Congress and the White House—that states unequivocally that if Iran ever moves toward enriching to weapons-grade, that we will stop that, militarily.

Senator NELSON. And your other sentence that leapt out at me, “But, verification means only that we catch the Iranians if they cheat. What matters more is that the Iranians recognize that they will pay a meaningful price when we catch them.”

General PETRAEUS. Correct. Absolutely. Yeah. Again, they’ve got to know in advance. And there are provisions in this. The snap-back provision actually, I think, is fairly artful. Again, there are many positive features in this. The elimination of other entire 20-percent stockpile, elimination of 97-98 percent of the low-enriched 3.5 percent, ends the plutonium path to a bomb, intrusive inspections, with some wrinkles, to be sure, and some challenges that have been noted. But, again, a number of positive, but some problematic ones, because along with that will come the release of at least \$50 billion, according to the Under Secretary of the Treasury, that has been frozen around the world. And this is for a country—that’s 10 percent of its GDP, just given to it. And, while most of that undoubtedly will go to worthy programs for Iranian citizens, there will be a portion that will end up in the pockets of the Quds Force and enable them to further enable Lebanese Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis in Yemen, who, when they couldn’t get their way at the political table, got their way with force of arms and so forth, and Shiite militia in Iraq.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Sessions.

Senator NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you.

General Petraeus, thank you for your service to your country. It’s been so valuable to us. Those who have watched your career, who have been with you in Iraq, seen you serve the country, I’m not aware of anyone who’s done a more superior job than you. And my respect for you and your integrity is unmatched.

And Senator McCain, I believe his opening statement is very important for all of us. I think the questions Senator Reed has asked raise the kind of practical questions we’ve got to deal with. And I believe that, at this point in time, we, as a Congress, needs to assert itself.

I think the first thing Congress should say to this administration is, “Show us a strategy that will leave us—lead us out of this morass that we’re in.” And we don’t have that today. I believe—and I’ll ask you. You’ve seen the political world, and you see the disagreements and agreements that occur. Don’t you think it’s possible for the Republicans and Democrats on this panel, in this Congress, to agree on a long-term overall strategy for the Middle East that could guide us for decades to come? And isn’t that important?

General PETRAEUS. Well, what’s interesting is that this is one of those moments in time where there seems to be bipartisan—a bipartisan sense of a need to do more, frankly. And that includes to define all the elements of a strategy. As I mentioned, some of those

elements are there, some are under-resourced, and some are missing.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, if we had an overall goal, I think it would be important to have our allies also join in that. I think—do you think that's possible—our European——

General PETRAEUS. I——

Senator SESSIONS.—allies, particularly——

General PETRAEUS. I——

Senator SESSIONS.—could join with us in a—on a plan that we could—it's got to extend beyond the next presidential election. We can't change our strategy every time a President changes.

General PETRAEUS. Look, I—you know, it's always good to recall Winston Churchill on allies, and he said the only thing worse than allies is not having any. And I spent a good bit of my time in Afghanistan, in particular, but also in Iraq, doing what might be termed “coalition maintenance.” And I firmly believe that we should never go it alone if we can avoid doing that, although we should also recognize that there will be different contributions from different countries. And, at the end of the day, there was—there were virtually no countries in Afghanistan that did not have some caveat of some type. And the art of that—of coalition command is figuring out what each country can uniquely do well, where each country needs to be augmented, frankly, by U.S. assets to enable it to do what it—to contribute the most that it can, given the limitations that it has.

Senator SESSIONS. I think this is a historic hearing. I remember Senator McCain's reference to your testimony with Ambassador Crocker. I asked you at that time, and you've already answered it, about the Middle East, I think, today, what you said. And we worried, “Could we be successful?” And I asked you, “Do you believe, if you go to Iraq with the—that we can achieve a successful result?” You said yes. I asked you, “If you got to the point where that wasn't possible, would you tell us so?” And you said yes. And you succeeded as you suggested that we could succeed.

I just can't tell you how much I value your opening statements. And I think we all should appreciate the efforts of Senator McCain at that time in 2007, when his presidential election—he placed everything he believed about the forces and our men and women in combat above any personal political goals. And I think that's a good example for all of us today.

General PETRAEUS. I seem to recall him saying that he would rather lose an election than lose a war.

Senator MCCAIN. So, I did both.

[Laughter.]

General PETRAEUS. And he—you know, if I could just make one quick comment, Senator. It's really important to remember the surge that mattered most was not the surge of forces, it was the surge of ideas. It was a change in strategy. Big ideas are everything. And shifting from consolidating on big bases and getting out of the neighborhoods to recognizing that the only way to secure the people is by living with them was big idea number one. It was very difficult to execute. It was costly. But, it was necessary, and it actually did help bring security and, ultimately, brought violence down by some 90 percent, coupled with the other big idea, which

was, you can't kill or capture your way out of an industrial-strength insurgency. You have to promote reconciliation. And that's why I singled out building on that case of reconciliation that had been established in late 2006 in—outside Ramadi by Lieutenant—now Lieutenant General MacFarland, who is actually back in that region and spending the bulk of his time in Baghdad.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your wise words. And I think it's a challenge to us to see if we can't, at this point in history, develop an overall view of the Middle East. There's been studies that show the violence that have been around where extremists—extreme Islam tends to cause conflicts. And I think we need to see the whole region. And, within it, we'll have allies, and we'll have problems, we'll have things we have to accept even if we don't like. Some things we're going to have to try to provide leadership on. And a long-term agreement of that kind among both parties and all of our people, including our allies around the world, I believe would be a positive development. My hand is open to try to reach that kind of agreement.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Manchin.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, General, thank you again for your service—

General PETRAEUS. Yes, sir.

Senator MANCHIN.—but also for being here today and presenting to us. I think it's most valuable.

You know, we look at trying to find something that would resonate over in that part of the world, especially with Syria being so unstable right now, and our relationships in that area. You can only look back at our past performance and find out, you know, and learn from that. So, you know, when Qadhafi was taken out of Libya and we had nothing to replace Qadhafi with, we see what's happened to Libya. We're gone out of there.

In Iraq, when Maliki was put in, there had to be somebody making decisions on this was the person we're going to put in, knowing he had to be a hardline Shi'ite, knowing that he would divide up the Sunni-Shi'ite forces there and cause, basically, the instability that we have. Was that not considered, or is it just impossible to find a moderate that can work with the different sectors involved?

General PETRAEUS. First of all, there's been a lot of discussion of this, and a lot looking back. Ambassador Jeffrey, who was the Ambassador at the time—

Senator MANCHIN. I might add, so I—

General PETRAEUS.—has written about this.

Senator MANCHIN. That's the caution that we have with Assad right now. Everyone's saying, "Who do you replace him with?" What do you do, since we've had failures in both of those?

General PETRAEUS. Again, this is—you know, you play the—

Senator MANCHIN. Sure.

General PETRAEUS.—part you're dealt. You can influence that sometimes. There may have been a moment to do that. I actually ended up being in Afghanistan during the penultimate months of that. But, I was there for the initial piece.

We should remember that—you know, I've been tough in Prime Minister Maliki here, but Prime Minister Maliki during the surge and, indeed, in the years after the surge, he's the one who went

after the Shiite militia in Basrah, very, frankly, impulsively, as you may recall, in the charge of nights in—in March. We called it March Madness, in March of 2008. And it was a very close-run affair until we could get all of the forces marshaled to support his elements that were on the ground. And ultimately, it was a resounding victory there, in Sadr City, in Khatami, in a number of other places in Baghdad, and actually set the conditions for a period of relative stability and reasonable harmony that lasted for several years after that. Tragically, he undid much of what was done during the surge, no longer honored agreements that were made with the Sunni population, with the so-called Sons of Iraq, and so forth. And again, there has been a lot of academic and pundit discussion, think-tank discussion on why we hung with him, especially because—former Prime Minister Allawi got one more vote in the Parliament, but then just couldn't form a government, and so there was a lot of wrangling back and forth.

Without question, this is something that is in everyone's mind and in everyone's memory. And again, certainly the experience with Qadhafi, although I think, at the point at which we committed to support the upspring—wellspring of citizens going after Qadhafi, that that, arguably, was the right move. What needed to happen after that, of course, was to immediately, as quickly as possible, try to carry out a DDR program—a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program—for all the different militias, try to help form security forces as quickly as possible. And I think that we have learned some lessons in that regard so that, when you've got an inclusive government, that it's supported wholeheartedly and you move forward.

Senator MANCHIN. If I may, sir, I—

General PETRAEUS. Sure. Yes, sir.

Senator MANCHIN. Time's limited here. But, the Iran nuclear decision was probably the most difficult for all of us, not just in this committee, but, I think, in the whole Senate membership. With that being said, I leaned strongly toward supporting, because I wanted to work with our allies. And I always said, if I couldn't go home and explain it, I couldn't vote for it. And I could not explain to West Virginians, basically, when they would ask the question, What happens at the end of 8 and a half to 10 years? What happens at 15? Because we put them in a position to be stronger if they had not changed their ways. And, since we didn't hold them accountable, basically, for their actions of terrorists, then how do you expect them to change their ways later on? So, that was the one thing to stop me from supporting it.

What I would ask you is, How damaging to our allies would we have been—would the U.S. have been if it had been defeated, if we had not—those who voted for it had not voted for it? Would it have damaged our relationships, since our allies were all saying, "We're going to go without you"?

General PETRAEUS. Oh, absolutely. Sure. And I think there are big questions about what would have happened—what would happen to the sanctions regime. Could you get it back together? We had kept Russia and China onboard through this whole process. Does it all become unraveled? And so forth.

And, look, I think the real question—this is a reality. Focusing forward, taking the rearview mirrors off the bus, the biggest question is, What happens after 15 years? That's when virtually all—there's a few that linger.

Senator MANCHIN. I got it.

General PETRAEUS. But, virtually all of the restrictions of the agreement end, and Iran can move out quite smartly in a variety of different areas in building its enrichment capacity and other elements of a program. And that's why it is so vitally important that the U.S. be very, very clear, crystal clear, ironclad, why the White House and Congress, together, should be very clear about what would happen if Iran ever made a move towards weapons-grade enrichment. That will also, again, not only, hopefully, deter Iran, but also reassure our Gulf allies. And that's another very important consideration.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, sir.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Wicker.

Senator WICKER. General Petraeus, thank you for your testimony.

I think we could have gotten a Status of Forces Agreement in Iraq if we'd really, really tried. Do you agree with that?

General PETRAEUS. Actually, I—let me put it to you another way. I—I mean, if it goes through the Parliament—the problem was, it was not probably going to be approved by the Parliament.

An interesting fact is that I believe we now have 3500 troops on the ground without a Status of Forces Agreement. So, we seem comfortable doing this now that we really have to. And, candidly, that was something I think we might have considered trying, given that the Prime Minister was going to give his personal assurance, and tested out. There's no guarantee that having 10,000 troops on the ground would have given us the influence or prevented Prime Minister Maliki from taking the highly sectarian actions that he did, but I would have liked to have tested the proposition.

Senator WICKER. Thank you for that.

I'm encouraged that you're so positive about Prime Minister Abadi and his reforms, and the fact that he is—has the backing of Iraqi citizens in the streets. I assume by that you mean Kurdish Iraqi citizens in the street. Sunni—

General PETRAEUS. No, I mean—I mean Shiite Iraqi. If you look at the—

Senator WICKER. Okay. Well, what about—

General PETRAEUS. I think folks haven't—

Senator WICKER.—the Sunnis—

General PETRAEUS.—picked up—

Senator WICKER.—and the Kurds?

General PETRAEUS. I don't think folks have picked up—well, they very much want to see inclusive governance. The Sunnis desperately need it, because, without this, they have no source of revenue. So, those who say, "Let Iraq break up," by the way—it's one thing to—for Kurdistan, which is largely autonomous, now actually has pretty good oil revenues coming in, although not enough. I can—they are running a deficit, and they still need what they can

get, their 17 percent out of the oil revenues from Iraq proper, which means really the two southern provinces that produce the most. But, there's no oil or gas revenue going to be provided for the Sunni areas. There's no production in those areas. So, one of the really serious problems is, How would they survive? The second is, Who draws the boundaries? Where are the borders? I mean, if you have a state of politics that's so fractious that you have a population that's alienated, how in the world are you going to have an amicable divorce? This will be a very fractious divorce, and it will be another civil war, perhaps, along the lines of Syria.

Senator WICKER. Okay.

General PETRAEUS. So, great concern about that. Abadi wants to pursue inclusive politics. But, I don't think people have picked up that there are huge demonstrations going on in the cities of Iraq in the southern part of the country, because of citizens who are outraged by insufficient services, particularly electricity, during extraordinarily hot weather in recent weeks—really, month—and then corruption. And they are just flat outraged. The Grand Ayatollah, then, seeing this outrage through his clerics, issued statements that really encouraged the kinds of reforms that Prime Minister Abadi has now pursued, and they are now moving—each week, he has pursued more reforms. And, indeed, he knows that the only way to get—to combat ISIL sustainably is to get the people in the area where ISIS is located to turn against them in the same way that we did with reconciliation with the Anbar Awakening with the Sons of Iraq Program. But, of course, citizens can't turn against a particularly barbaric force unless they have a sense that they're going to be secured. So, this will have to proceed. But, to do that, you have to have Sunni Arab Iraqis who will not only clear, but then be able to hold these forces, with a considerable assistance from us in the form of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance and precision strike assets.

Senator WICKER. Okay. So, let me make sure I understand. That—this sort of divorce you talk about is something really to be avoided in Iraq. And you have a different view about Syria, where you seem to suggest in your testimony it wouldn't be the end of the world if Syria as we've known it does split up into three or four—

General PETRAEUS. Well, because they've had this horrific situation. I mean, Syria—

Senator WICKER. So, you have—

General PETRAEUS.—has gone through considerable—you can call it sectarian cleansing. I mean, you've had horrific sectarian displacement. I mean, this would not have been the solution for Syria 4 years ago. But, we are where we are with Syria, and you see enormous displacement of different sects. You—

Senator WICKER. But, we can avoid that in Iraq, and we should make every effort to—

General PETRAEUS. No guarantee we can, at all. This is a—going to be a very close-run affair. But, we should try to avoid it, I think. There will be greater devolution of power. There's going to be—have to be a different political bargain, if you will, between Baghdad and the Sunni Arab provinces. And, by the way, one of the challenges on the Sunni Arab side is that the Mosulawis don't agree with the Tikrikis who don't agree with the Anbaris. So, you

even have a fractious situation among the various Sunni leaders—by the way, all whom come through here or see you somewhere out in the region. So, that's going to be difficult, as well. There is nothing easy about this situation right now. But, I don't think we should just say, "Okay, we'll just let it go further," because there are still mixed areas in Baghdad, there are still mixed areas in the Baghdad belts. Diyala Province is still highly mixed. There have been efforts to reduce that amount of mixing. There has been sectarian displacement; indeed, in some cases, perhaps worse than that. But, the only way to prevent that kind of horrific civil war breaking out, which is what will—the result will be if there is a determination to break it into Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdistan—you've got to get inclusive politics. You, once again, have to give the Sunnis a sense that they have a stake in the success of the future of Iraq rather than a stake in its failure. And that's what they came to feel, back in 2006, before the surge, and it's what they have come to feel in the last couple of years, as well.

Senator WICKER. Well, your answers are very thorough, and we're way out of time. I—let me just ask for something on the record, because Senator McCain mentioned it in his opening statement. I would hope that, on the record, you can give us your insight as to what lessons we might apply in Afghanistan that we've learned from our experience in Iraq.

General PETRAEUS. Could—Chairman, could I make two quick points on Afghanistan, possibly?

First of all, there have been reports recently that there was a policy or an acceptance of what clearly is absolutely reprehensible, unacceptable behavior by certain Afghans with using male, essentially, sex slaves and so forth. I was very pleased to see General Campbell issue a statement today, the current Commander in Afghanistan, who, by the way, was a two-star in Afghanistan, as you'll recall, with the great 101st Airborne Division when I was the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force. He was also there as a brigade commander. And he stated very clearly that has never been a policy, it is not a policy now, and it certainly was not something that was acceptable or even discussed, frankly, when I was the Commander of the International Security Assistance Force.

The very first line of a counterinsurgency guidance that I put out as COM ISAF said we have to help—we have to be seen to be helping secure and serve the people, and we have to help the Afghan forces do the same. There's no way that that kind of behavior would be seen as helping to serve the Afghan people. And it is absolutely unacceptable.

Second, look, I do think that we have to take a very hard look at our future plans for the footprint that we have in Afghanistan, recognizing that now there is an Islamic State presence being established there, recognizing there still is work to be done to continue the disruption, the further disruption of al-Qaeda senior leadership in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan. That campaign has had considerable—considerable progress, success, indeed not only on Osama bin Laden, but, over a certain period, three number-tuos in about an 18-month period. And that is a very, very much diminished in capability central headquarters for

al-Qaeda, but it has to continue to be disrupted, because we don't own the ground, and really nor does Pakistan, fully.

Beyond that, we're in a situation where, with a relatively modest number of United States forces providing assistance to our Afghan partners, we are able to continue to accomplish the mission that we went to Afghanistan to achieve. And we cannot forget why we went there and why we stayed. It was because Afghanistan was where al-Qaeda planned the 9/11 attacks and conducted the initial training for those attacks. And our mission was to ensure that never again would Afghanistan be a sanctuary for al-Qaeda or other transnational extremists to do that again.

That mission has been accomplished, so far, as you know, Senator. It is now being done with a relatively modest number of U.S. forces. There still are casualties, but way, way less for us. In the meantime, Afghan forces are very much fighting and dying for their country to help achieve the mission that is so important to us and to them, to not allow the force retake their country, the Taliban, that did allow al-Qaeda to camp out on its soil and plan those attacks.

Senator REED [presiding]. Thank you very much.

On behalf of Chairman McCain, let me recognize Senator Donnelly.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, General, thank you and your family for your service to this country. And it is good to have you back here with us today, and we appreciate your ideas, your advice a great deal.

One of the things I want to ask you about is, you emphasized the need to work with the Kurds, Turkey, Israel, and other allies, to interdict Iranian arms bound for extremist groups. We've had the authority to cut off these shipments. What are the challenges, and what are your recommendations, to help finish the job on this?

General PETRAEUS. Well, the challenges have been that there has been fairly devious and difficult operational security carried out by Iran when it has provided weapons to different forces, whether it's Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis, whatever. We do have a unique situation with respect to Hamas now that is quite extraordinary, and that is that Egypt, for the first time, is cutting the tunnels and absolutely obliterating the tunnels that used to enable the, basically, free movement of goods and—including weapons and ammunition, from the Sinai into Gaza. That is no longer a reality, and that is a major development in that regard, and a big help to us.

Beyond that, I do think we make gains in a variety of different technologies and forms of intelligence, whether it's so-called maritime big data or a variety of other advances that can help us interdict that flow of—maritime flow, first, as it has, to some degree, limited the flow to the Houthis, where, of course, in Yemen, where the Saudis, the Emirates, the Qataris, other Gulf Cooperation Council countries are engaged in rolling back the action of the Iranian-supported Houthis, who, as I mentioned earlier, are trying to get at the point of a gun what they couldn't get at the negotiating table.

Senator DONNELLY. Because I see this as a critical part of the nuclear agreement that was just put together, is, what you were talking about, the promise and the guarantee that we'll stand with

them to push back on the conventional side from corner to corner here. And one of the areas is Lebanon, as well, and Hezbollah. How do you feel we can be most effective at interdicting materiel, missiles, and others going to Hezbollah?

General PETRAEUS. I think what we can most effectively do is assist our Israeli allies, frankly, with the provision of intelligence from a variety of different sources. And they have certainly not shrunk from taking action when there have been meaningful movements of military capabilities going from Syria to Lebanon, for example.

The concerns that President Netanyahu discussed with President Putin yesterday, I believe it was, undoubtedly included a discussion of Israel saying, "We will continue to take action if hardware that matters moves from, say, Damascus to—into the Beqaa Valley into Lebanon Hezbollah."

Senator DONNELLY. I wanted to follow up with a question about Baghdad, where you say so much has to be determined. When we were in Iraq not too long ago, it was pretty clear that the Shiite leadership in Baghdad was not creating any confidence with the Sunni leaders in the tribal belt out in Anbar and in other areas. And so, how do we change that mix? I know supporting Abadi is critical, but how do we change the mix of so many of the Shiite leaders who are tied to Iran so closely in getting some understanding in them that it's not going to work against ISIS unless we have our Sunni tribal leaders with us, and they're not going to be with us until they start to feel that the Shiite leaders in Baghdad understand that, give them a piece—give them, in effect, a piece of ownership of the country?

General PETRAEUS. Well, what's very, very important is that the elected Prime Minister of the country recognizes the criticality of inclusive politics. That is hugely important. It's also important to recognize that the people right now are quite supportive of the actions the Prime Minister is taking, because the people are outraged about the lack of basic services, the corruption—

Senator DONNELLY. He has a real—

General PETRAEUS.—and so forth.

Senator DONNELLY.—window now, then.

General PETRAEUS. He has a window. This is a very tenuous situation, because, again, opposing him are the very forces that, arguably, saved Baghdad when the Islamic State was threatening it on its—on the belts. And then, these are the forces that some people are allied with. And they—by the way, at least a couple of these forces are led by individuals who were in detention, during my time as the commander of the multinational force, because of their involvement in the killing of our soldiers. They are now leading, not only militias, but parties in the Parliament, to give you some sense of how challenging this is.

So, we're going to have to patiently, painstakingly, day after day, engage, use our convening authority, our support for the establishment of Iraqi Security Forces not beholden to a particular political party with Iranian support, and so forth.

But, this is going to be a close-run affair, make no mistake about it. Prime Minister Abadi has crossed the Rubicon into—in the form of the reforms that he is pursuing. Keep in mind that when he did

away with the vice presidencies, he did away with the jobs of the former Prime Minister of Iraq, Maliki, another former Prime Minister, Allawi, and the former Sunni Arab Speaker of the Parliament. These are considerable figures, and I think it was the right move, a very strong move, but he is going to have to be shored up in every way that is possible, not just by the United States, but by the coalition, and, more importantly, by forces within Iraq that want to see their country move forward again as an inclusive country rather than one that practices exclusive politics that are carried out, in many cases, at the force of a gun.

Keep in mind the outrageous activities that have taken place in Baghdad, where one of these militias just recently, basically, kidnapped—I think it was 18 or so Turkish workers, moved them all the way from Baghdad down to Basrah without being stopped, and is holding them ransom down there for some not particularly clear objective, other than Turkey stopping the flow of ISIS into Iraq. There have been very, very public threats by some of the militias against serving leaders, including the Prime Minister.

So, this is a moment of real consequence, a moment of considerable drama in Baghdad, and I think we have missed how significant it is to see this number of Iraqi citizens in the streets expressing their outrage at what's going on in Baghdad, a Prime Minister who's moving to take action in response to that, but very powerful elements that are going to oppose him.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you again for your service to the country.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN [presiding]. Isn't it true that the major political influence is Iranian in Baghdad?

General PETRAEUS. It is certainly a very important one. I'd have to think through what other one might possibly rival it. But, I can't think—come up with one.

But, you know, having said that, Chairman, as you know, Iraq has never wanted to be the 51st state of Iran and use that support like a crutch when it's required. The problem is that, when that support gets tentacles into parties and so forth, it's very hard to get it back out.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Fischer.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General, for your—

General PETRAEUS. Senator.

Senator FISCHER.—service to this country, but also for being here today so that you can provide us with, I think, some very important insights.

Our approach in Syria and Iraq seems to be that we're going to be relying on local partners to be the boots on the ground. Just how far do you think these local partners are going to be able to take us?

General PETRAEUS. Well, again, they'll go as far as is in their interest to do so, which is why I mentioned earlier—we just have to be realistic about that. That is reality. That's why I mentioned earlier, we should not think that the Kurdish peshmerga, for example, can be pushed much farther below where it is that they are in Iraq right now, or, frankly, the Syrian peshmerga. Again, you might get

them a bit farther, you might employ them for some specific operations. They'll play a role in clearing parts of Mosul, one would think. But, they can't, ultimately, hold those areas if they are predominantly Sunni Arab. So, I think, in that sense, we just have to be realistic. They have a stake, however, in doing, generally, what it is that we want done, which is to defeat the extreme—the most extreme of extremists, the Islamic State, and then also, of course, ultimately to create a context within which Bashar al-Assad will be ushered from the scene in Syria, although it's difficult to tell, again, what ultimate shape Syria will have at that point.

Senator FISCHER. General Dempsey speaks about patience and risk, and weighing of the patience needed and against how much risk we're looking at. How much patience should we be exhibiting towards our local partners in Iraq and Syria? How long should we stick with them before we reach a point where we've assumed too much risk and there may be no options left that the United States can look at? When do we reach that point? And is a tactical stalemate where we want to be?

General PETRAEUS. Well, look, as I said, we are not where we should be. And the tactical stalemate is actually a fairly dynamic stalemate. This is not a stalemate that has, you know, World War I trenches, and so forth. There's a lot of movement. We are rolling back ISIS in certain places, inflicting very heavy casualties on them. I would not want to be a leader in the Islamic State in Iraq or Syria, because I think it would be very hard to get a life insurance policy if you were in those shoes.

Having said that, there's a lot of reinforcements flowing in. And yes, we've pushed them out of this area or that area, and then they go into Ramadi. Or, in Syria, they've sustained defeats around Khobani, and they go into lightly defended Palmyra. So, again, this is still a lot of movement. And ISIS is on the defensive in certain areas—without question, in many areas—but still has the freedom of action to exercise initiatives, certainly in some places.

The key with our partners is, of course, to be—we should be impatient, we should push it as hard as we can. But, as you know, this is one of those where you can't rush to failure. And that's, unfortunately, what can happen if we push it just too hard.

Senator FISCHER. I believe, in your opening, you said that, in the future, what will be our relationship to the Iranian power, as we see this after the agreement, and that the United States used to be a counter to Iran, and now we may be looking at accommodating them. Can you tell me what you feel would be the challenges and if there are any opportunities to both of those positions—

General PETRAEUS. Well—

Senator FISCHER.—if we find ourselves as—

General PETRAEUS. Sure.

Senator FISCHER.—a counter or if we find ourselves as being there just to accommodate Iran?

General PETRAEUS. Yeah. And again, what I said was that there are concerns in the region that we might accommodate Iran, that we might work with them, and now Russia—

Senator FISCHER. And certain comments—

General PETRAEUS.—and Bashar.

Senator FISCHER.—I think—

General PETRAEUS. Now——

Senator FISCHER.—have challenged our credibility recently, from the Secretary of State, with—in Syria, for example, though, as well. So, it goes to our credibility in the region, too, beyond that.

General PETRAEUS. And credibility matters.

Senator FISCHER. Yes.

General PETRAEUS. I can tell you, I was just out in Asia, Mr. Chairman, and Australia, and it's all about United States credibility and what does it—what does that mean for the South China Sea? Does what happened in Syria a few years ago have implications for that? The answer is yes, it does.

At the end of the day, if Iran's foreign policy is continued to be dictated by the Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force and enables proxies like Lebanese Hezbollah, a designated terrorist organization by the United States, Hamas, another one, Houthis, again, with what they're doing, and murderous Shiite militia in Iraq, then obviously we have to counter that malign activity. If, on the other hand, Iran changes spots, whatever changes its approach and so forth, I—by all means, if the conditions change, then we should be always alert for opportunities to work with what used to be a former enemy. We've done this throughout our history. I think the chances of that are not particularly high, but it's not something one can rule out if something happens as a result, perhaps of Iran being reintegrated into the global economy and deciding that it wants to be a responsible world citizen instead of trying to achieve regional hegemony.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Cotton.

Senator COTTON. General Petraeus, thank you very much for joining us today. Thank you for your many decades of distinguished service——

General PETRAEUS. Thanks for your own service.

Senator COTTON.—to our country.

In your testimony, you've broken your main areas of focus down to Iraq, Syria, and Iran, and also you recognized the interrelated nature of them. I want to start with the section on Iran where you emphasize that the nuclear deal, whatever its short-term implications for the nuclear program, cannot be seen as ushering in a new age of accommodation or conciliation of Iran's interests in the regions. Given what's happened in Syria over the last month with Russia entering the picture, how do you think that our Arab and Israeli partners in the region view our current posture towards Iran's influence in Syria?

General PETRAEUS. Well, I think they're actually waiting to see right now, frankly. I think—that's why I inserted the point. I talk to a number of those individuals, and—on a quite regular basis—and they have expressed concerns about the future. And they want to see us continue to counter malign activity by Iran if that continues. And we have to be very, very clear about that. Beyond that, I think, again, the very clear, ironclad statement about what would happen if Iran moves towards weapons-grade uranium enrichment after the 15-year mark, or if they should do it before then, has—that has to be very clear, as well. That would speak volumes.

Senator COTTON. You helpfully recommend in your testimony a few concrete suggestions for policy direction for each of Iran, Syria, and Iran. There is one related to Iran that says, quote, “additional actions to demonstrate that the theater remains set with respect to our own capabilities to carrying out military operations against Iran’s nuclear program, if necessary,” end quote. Would you elaborate on what you mean by that?

General PETRAEUS. Thanks, Senator.

Back—in fact, when I was the Commander of United States Central Command, we developed a plan that would attack Iran’s nuclear program. It was quite thoroughly developed, rehearsed, and the theater was set. In other words, as a logistician, as Senator Ernst would appreciate, we—you know, we had all the bed-down sites, we had munitions positioned, the fuel. Everything is there so that if you need to conduct an attack like that on relatively short notice, you can do it. The theater has remained set, by and large, ever since. I think there’s the possibility of adjustments now, because some of the countries in the region, I think, would be more accommodating to basing than they were at that time. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia foremost among them. So, again, I think it’s time to very publicly lay out how we have postured our forces—again, not giving away major secrets, here, or something like that—but ensuring that the region knows, and Iran knows, that, if need be, we can do what is necessary with our military forces.

Senator COTTON. What message does the absence of a United States Navy aircraft carrier group in the Persian Gulf send to Iran, Syria, and Russia, on the one hand, and the Sunni Gulf states, on the other hand?

General PETRAEUS. It says that there are limits to U.S. military power. What I don’t know is whether that means that there’s none in, not only the Arabian Gulf, but also in the Arabian Sea. In the past, we’ve actually had two out there, at a—or at least a minimum of one, although that one might sit off the coast, sort of south of Pakistan, flying its aircraft up into Afghanistan every day. And if there’s none in either of those locations, again, that’s a statement that there are distinct limits to what it is we’re capable of doing, and therefore, there are limits to what we can do to help the forces in the region.

Senator COTTON. Moving northward to Syria, you write, in one of your proposals for Syria, “We could, for example, tell Assad that the use of barrel bombs must end, and, if they continue, we will stop the Syrian air force from flying.” I suspect that he will not listen to us if we tell him that, so we must stop him if we want them to stop. Did you propose this policy to President Obama while you were in government?

General PETRAEUS. Yeah. When Syria started, I was the Director of the CIA, not in uniform anymore, and certainly didn’t have any responsibility for military actions with respect to Syria.

Senator COTTON. Did you support that policy that others recommended?

General PETRAEUS. I don’t remember a recommendation of it. I don’t remember barrel bombs at that time, frankly. Again, this is the very early stages, where there was no Lebanese Hezbollah, there was no ISIS, there was no Jabhat al-Nusra, there was no

Khorasan Group, and there was no—maybe limited Quds Force advisors on the ground.

Senator COTTON. And now there's Russia, with surface-to-air missiles and fighter aircraft. Could you explain to us what exactly it would look like if we were to stop Assad from using these barrel bombs or to ground his aircraft, given the presence of Russia in such heavy numbers now?

General PETRAEUS. Well, I think Russia would probably get a little bit of advanced warning once certain assets are in the air. This doesn't mean that you have to penetrate into the integrated air defense of what might be left of that integrated air defense of Syria. You can do this with, again, lots of different forms of cruise missiles coming off of ships, subs, and planes.

Senator COTTON. Thank you. My time is expired.

Senator REED [presiding]. Thank you, Senator Cotton.

On behalf of the Chairman, let me recognize Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And, General Petraeus, great to have you with us. This testimony has been quite helpful. So, I'm going to just go into areas where I'm confused and I'm really interested in your opinion.

We've had a lot of testimony before this committee, really over the last year and a half, most recently General Austin's posture hearing in March of this year, that talks about the instability we're seeing in the region as kind of a spiking of a longstanding Sunni/Shiite divide that is, at some points, relatively calm, and, at other points, you know, pretty significant. And yet, I've also heard others say that that might overstate it. It could be more Arab v. Persian or, you know, Revolutionary Guard v. monarchy, or it could be all of them together. But, I just would like to ask your question—your opinion on this. Do you think the Sunni/Shiite divide, kind of the sectarian divide, is widening? And is that a significant contributing factor to the challenges that we're seeing?

General PETRAEUS. I think that there has been a widening of the sectarian divide. I think what you see in Syria is very much a sectarian civil war. But, I would also point out, there are also ethnic overtones, because, in Syria alone, you have a Kurdish—Syrian Kurdish element that clearly wants, and has now achieved, a degree of greater autonomy. And you have, of course, the same in Iraq. And then, frankly, in some other countries you have what might be more of a tribal—or, say, an Islamist versus non-Islamist, as is the case in Libya, with a real civil war, but largely between Sunni Arabs, or in Tunisia, which has been more of a political contest, where, thankfully, the two leaders of the major parties actually agreed to agree with each other, or at least not to be a—opposed to the bitter end, but actually reach some compromise.

Senator KAINE. To the extent that—so, multiple factors. And that's my sense, too, from my more limited experience. But, to the extent that some of the divide—some of the instability is caused by a widening sectarian divide, would you agree that it is pretty important that the United States not unwittingly sort of, you know, plant our feet on one side or the other of a sectarian divide? Sunni versus Shiite is not the U.S.'s issue, and we do need to be careful and just kind of be mindful of not giving the impression that we're taking a side in a sectarian divide.

General PETRAEUS. No, I think that's—that is accurate. And I think all we have to do if people say, "Well, you're on the side of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries or all Sunni Arab," we would then merely point out, of course, that we have supported the Shiite Arabs in Iraq, and if it were not for our action, Sunni Arabs would still be ruling the country.

Senator KAINE. Right. Indeed.

General PETRAEUS. A Shiite-majority country, by far.

Senator KAINE. Indeed.

Another strategic challenge. It seems like the areas where we've done best in the battle against ISIL are the areas where we've worked in close cooperation with the Kurds. I was at the—with Senator Donnelly at the Joint Operations Command in Erbil in July, I guess, and then some of the activities of the United States and Kurds working together in northern Syria have had some success. But, sadly, "no success" doesn't create some of its own challenges. And, on the Syrian side, it just struck me as odd that, after a long time of trying to get Turkey more engaged in the battle of—against ISIL, it was—when we started to do a lot of work together with the Kurds, around Khobani and elsewhere, and achieved some success, that Turkey then decided, "Okay, now is time we want to really participate in this." And then, there's obviously been tension between Turkey and some of the, you know, very elements that—Kurdish elements in northern Syria that are having some success against ISIL. I'd be interested in your, kind of—

General PETRAEUS. Sure.

Senator KAINE.—thoughts on the Turkish role, here, and how we maintain that NATO alliance with Turkey and get them involved in the battle against ISIL without them cutting the legs out from under the Kurds, who have been effective partners.

General PETRAEUS. I mean, Turkey's been an ally for decades, very, very important country in the defense, first, against the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Union, and continues to play a very important role. And I think it's very significant that, again, General Allen and others did great work to get access to Incirlik Airbase and to get pledges by Turkey to—certainly to make the movement of ISIL through their country into Syria much more difficult.

But, clearly there are historic tensions between Turkey and their Kurdish population. Very sadly, very tragically, there is now much greater violence as a cease-fire—and there are various explanations as to why this has happened, and whether the blame lies in the capital of Turkey or out with the Kurds, themselves.

But, this another complicating factor, without question. And I think we saw that the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq, which was starting to think that Turkey would be very, very supportive as they were exporting oil through Turkey and so forth, when they tried to reinforce Khobani with Kurdish peshmerga from Iraq, found it very difficult to move that until the United States again offered its convening authority and brought people together and helped push that through. So, there are some historic tensions there, as well.

And so, again, the—I mean, the bottom line, as you very, very rightly identified, there aren't—there are sectarian divides that are

very, very important, probably—arguably, the most important, unless you're caught in the middle of an ethnic divide——

Senator KAINE. Yeah.

General PETRAEUS.—between, say, Arab and Kurd or Arab and Persian, when that's the most important. And then there's also a tribal overlay, and even in—Islamist versus non-Islamist in countries like, again, Libya, Tunisia, and, frankly, in Egypt, for that matter.

Senator KAINE. Great.

General, thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator REED. On behalf of the Chairman, let me recognize Senator Rounds.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir.

General Petraeus, thank you very much for your service to our country.

Over the last year or so, Prime Minister of Israel has come before us and explained and expressed his concern with regard to the—what I would call the nuclear concession agreement which our administration has proposed. King Abdullah of Jordan has been before us and has requested, as he said—first of all, on the day that it was announced that one of his pilots had been incinerated, he said, “Thank you for the F-16s, but,” he says, “it would be very appropriate if we could also receive some of the armaments, which we have been waiting on as a country for literally 24 months.” And then, in the spring of this year, Saudi Arabia, along with a coalition of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, Iraq, Sudan, Egypt, and UAE, when they began their campaign in support of, or at least in their attempt to make headway in Yemen, we found out about it as a nation after it had occurred. Seems to me that that does not suggest, in any one of those occasions, a deep degree of cooperation and trust with those traditional partners that we have. You mentioned the need for coalition maintenance. Could you give us your assessment on what needs to be done right now to perhaps begin the process of building and maintaining that coalition that we've been relying on in the Middle East for years?

General PETRAEUS. Sure. And some of the elements, of course, were in my opening statement, where I talked about, again, first and foremost, reassuring them that Iran will never be allowed to enrich to weapons-grade, then approving requests for various weapon systems that have taken a long time to be approved and wouldn't seem to threaten any of the balances about which we are concerned. That's particularly interesting now that there is a convergence of interest between Israel and the Gulf states, as an example. The integration of different military capabilities of the countries themselves—take ballistic missile defense, early warning systems, and so forth—again, this is something we have been pushing. Secretary Carter has encouraged, as Commander of Central Command. Again, there's more we can do in those areas, as well.

Again, this is—really comes down to a question of whether we'll be there when they need us most. There's no question there have been strains. There's no question that some of the episodes in recent years have generated some concern. We have to be careful not to overdo it, because there's an insatiable desire for certain—you

know, the requests never stop. But, I think we do have to reassure these countries, and I've laid out some ways, in the opening statement, I think, on how we should go about that.

Senator ROUNDS. I'd like to go back to one of those thoughts, and that was that you indicated we should make it crystal clear that we would not allow uranium enrichment to occur with regard to the Iranians' activities.

General PETRAEUS. To weapons-grade.

Senator ROUNDS. To weapons-grade.

General PETRAEUS. Right.

Senator ROUNDS. Do you think that's missing in the—or one of the items which was missing in the arrangement or the proposal that the administration has brought forward?

General PETRAEUS. I think we can make it more clear. And, frankly, if Congress and the White House were to do it together, if this was, you know, seen as ironclad—again, remember that, of course, it's not Members of this Congress or this White House that are going to be around 15 years from now. It'll be their successors' successors. But, establishing a U.S. policy that becomes, again, very, very foundational, I think would be a very important move. The President did, in a letter to one of your House of Representatives, Congressman Nadler, lay this out, but then there was a little qualification later on. So, again, this is a time just to be absolutely clear, straightforward. And I think that that opportunity is there.

Senator ROUNDS. I agree with you. I wish it would have been included in the proposal that we saw.

Finally, with regard to reconciliation, I just noted one item—when we talk about building and trying to find those coalitions and so forth, I just wanted to—a clarification, and that is with regard to ISIS. Do you see any reconciliation ever available with those who we now term as ISIS?

General PETRAEUS. Certainly not with any of their leaders, middle leaders, or probably the bulk of the rank-and-file. I mean, this is such an extremist organization that it is probably beyond redemption. I wouldn't rule out the possibility of a few misguided souls that want to come back to the fold.

A fair amount was made that I said that we should deal with Jabhat al-Nusra, the al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria. I really didn't say anything of the sort. What I did say is, we should try to strip away from within—Jabhat al-Nusra has had a number of groups that probably would have been classified as moderate Sunni Arab elements drift to it because it had resources, and they did not, and because it, probably more importantly, is actually fighting against Bashar al-Assad, and the forces that we were supporting had to accept that they'd—they would not do that, as a condition of our providing them weapons and training.

And I do think that there's a possibility that there might be some sub-sub elements, and certainly some fighters, that could be wooed back to the cause of the—we did this—you know, it was not popular throughout the ranks in Iraq in February 2007 when I said that we are going to have to sit down with people who have our blood on their hands—al-Qaeda Iraq and associated insurgent groups. That did not mean that we sat down with the leaders of Iraq—of al-Qaeda Iraq. We tried to kill or capture them. The same

with the major insurgent groups. It did mean that there were a number of individuals, though, below that with whom we did deal and did bring them in. Ultimately, you know, there were 103,000 or so Sons of Iraq, of which about 80,000 or so were Sunni Arab. And, by the way, there were Shiite Arab Sons of Iraq, as well, ones that wanted to shed their ties with the militia, particularly after the militia were defeated.

Senator ROUNDS. Thank you, sir.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman MCCAIN [presiding]. Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General, for being here today.

The Middle East is an area that is very complicated, and there's a lot of instability there, to say the least. So, how would you rank the most destabilizing forces in the Middle East, if you were to look at Assad, ISIL, Iran and its malign activities in the region, al-Qaeda?

General PETRAEUS. Well, I mean, they're all sources of enormous instability and, really, again, problems that extend beyond the region. The——

Senator HIRONO. So, would you be able to rank them?

General PETRAEUS. I don't think I can, no. And I—you know, on a given day, we might be more concerned with a plot by the Islamic State, which might actually do enormous damage in Europe to one of our allies, or perhaps even inspire something in the United States. On another day, it might be the actions of Iran in providing lethal munitions to Hamas to rain indirect-fire——

Senator HIRONO. So——

General PETRAEUS.—objects on Israel.

Senator HIRONO.—General, in the 10 years that you were—that you served in the Middle East, then, has it always been thus there? It could have been the Taliban, it—you know, there was always just a whole range of entities who created tremendous instability in that area—has it always been that way in the Middle East?

General PETRAEUS. Oh, no, I think the instability in the Middle East is much greater now than it was, say, when I was the Commander of U.S. Central Command, from 2008 through 2010. I mean, for one thing, we've had the Arab Spring. So, it's not just a result of extremist elements, Bashar al-Assad, or Iran. It is the throwing over of longtime dictators who did achieve a degree of stability in their countries, but obviously at such great expense——

Senator HIRONO. Yes.

General PETRAEUS.—that, ultimately, the people rejected them. So, I think that's probably the single biggest cause of the instability. And what you see then is groups like the Islamic State and, indeed, in some degree—to some degree, Iran and others, that are taking advantage of ungoverned or inadequately governed spaces. I think one of the lessons of the post-Arab Spring is that if an area is ungoverned or inadequately governed, extremists may well seek opportunities in those locations.

Senator HIRONO. Well, hence your caution about Assad and, if he were to be toppled, then who would come in to take his place.

There are some who have said that we ought to support the partitioning of Iraq, turning to Iraq, so that the Kurds, the Shiite, the Sunnis would have their areas. And I believe you said, today, that that would be a bad idea. Did you say that?

General PETRAEUS. I did.

Senator HIRONO. And do you see any kind of scenario where partitioning Iraq in some way would actually lead to some level of stability in allowing that country to go forward?

General PETRAEUS. It's a wonderful question. I have no intellectual objection to the concept of a Shiitistan, Sunnistan, and Kurdistan. I have never had anyone explain adequately to me, though, how you get to particularly the Sunnistan and the Shiitistan. Who is it that draws the boundaries? What happens, in terms of oil revenue for Sunnistan, which has no oil production in the footprint that it now occupies? So, again, this is a—there are some very serious practical issues here which, if not resolved, result in a civil war, and you'll have Syria Part 2, except in Iraq. So, again, intellectually, academically, okay. Tell me how you're going to get there in a country in which the politics are so fractious—

Senator HIRONO. Yes.

General PETRAEUS.—that the Sunni Arabs feel alienated from Baghdad. They're not going to agree. This is not going to be an amicable divorce. This will be a civil war.

Tragically, there has been further sectarian displacement during the latest violence, as there was, in fact, in the 2005-2006 time-frame, to a considerable degree. But, they're certainly by no means divided. And again, the concept for how the Sunnis would survive, how they'd generate revenue, how all of this would work, I think, are quite problematic.

Senator HIRONO. So, would you say that any kind of movement toward that kind of partitioning should come from within? It certainly shouldn't be imposed upon them from—

General PETRAEUS. Very, very good point. Indeed—

Senator HIRONO. We have not had—

General PETRAEUS.—you may—

Senator HIRONO.—much luck doing it—doing things that way.

General PETRAEUS. You—well, I mean, the boundaries were drawn by outsiders, and—

Senator HIRONO. Yes.

General PETRAEUS.—you see them be obliterated now, to some degree.

Yeah. No, I think you have raised a very, very important point, and that is that, whatever the future is, it's going to have to be agreed upon or it's going to be fought over.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I did have one more question, if I—I'm running out of time, but—would you mind?

Senator MCCAIN. Actually, you've run out, but please go ahead. [Laughter.]

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Over the weekend, the United States began military-to-military talks with Russia following the arrival of additional Russian military equipment, including tanks and fighters already in aircraft in

Syria. And I just wondered, What would your primary objectives be if you were holding these talks with Russia?

General PETRAEUS. Make sure that nothing goes bump in the night, you know, that there's not an operation carried out by either side that is misconstrued by the other, is misinterpreted, and ends up in shooting where there doesn't need to be shooting.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General PETRAEUS. I mean, the same as we actually have ship-to-ship conversations with Iranians. We had ship-to-ship conversations with Chinese in the counter-piracy mission off Somalia. Actually, we had ship-to-ship with Iranian ships that were actually helping with the counter-piracy mission.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator TILLIS.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Petraeus, I apologize for having to step out. I've been to a committee meeting, two meetings, and a vote since then, but I was here to listen to your opening statements, and I have to agree with the Chair, I think you did a extraordinary job in kind of setting the stage for the discussion and some of the concerns we should have in the region.

I did want to go back—and I do apologize if others asked you to expand on this; if you did, just let me know and I'll go back to the record—but, when you were talking about proposing enclaves as potential safe havens within Syria, could you give me an idea of what that would look like? Over what reasonable timeframe could we do it? To what extent could that potentially have a positive impact on the refugee situation in the region? Just give me a little bit better idea of how that would play out.

General PETRAEUS. Yeah. I don't think I can give you a timeline. I mean, it's going to start with us actually making a declaration that the barrel bombs are going to stop and that we're going to defend what's-ever in that enclave.

Senator TILLIS. And what statement or what strategic positions are we taking to end the barrel bombing? I mean, what, precisely, would the U.S. military, and potentially coalition partners, be doing to make sure that that just ceases?

General PETRAEUS. Well, you have a policy decision and a policy statement that says, "The barrel bombs stop, and, if they don't, your air force stops flying." Our military can figure out how to stop the—Bashar's air force from flying.

Senator TILLIS. I have another question, and——

General PETRAEUS. Could I——

Senator TILLIS. Oh, of course.

General PETRAEUS. On the enclave, Senator, I'm—the enclave is hugely important when it comes to refugees. I mean, what's happening is, the refugees are just—they're just giving up. And so, they are very much—they would want to go back, I think, still now, if there's any hope. And an enclave gives them hope. Without that, over time you're just going to see a continued exodus. And it's—it is already overwhelming, obviously, borders and countries in Europe.

Senator TILLIS. Now, we—you know, once you create an enclave, it could, on the one hand, be a safe haven, on the other hand, be

a huge target. So, then how do we—you know, we have attempted to train the Free Syrian Army as a potential—the original thought was not to put them in an offensive posture, but to put them in some sort of defensive posture so they, themselves, could create, I guess, enclaves around the areas that they, maybe, came from, and that that's not working. But, how do we then make sure that we have the presence on the ground to ensure the security of these so that they would be perceived as a safe haven in the region, versus the mass exodus that we're seeing now?

General PETRAEUS. Well, first, again, there's a policy decision that says, "We're going to protect you against all enemies, not just against the Islamic State." And I think, if they understand that, and if you put a sufficient constellation of assets over them, that you could do a reasonably good job with that and equip them with some radios and other communications devices so that we can be alerted if they're experiencing pressure. I—again, I don't want to make light of this. This is very complicated military activity, but it is doable.

Senator TILLIS. Can they—

General PETRAEUS. And, at a certain point, I'm not, you know, at all against having some of our forces in an enclave—

Senator TILLIS. And I think—

General PETRAEUS.—assuming it's reasonably secure.

Senator TILLIS.—you said in an advise-and-assist role.

General PETRAEUS. That's right. That's right.

Senator TILLIS. I have a—shifting to a different direction—Iran—the—last week, the President doubled down on his position to now allow petroleum exports from the United States while, at the same time, the Iran deal was going to allow Iran to export oil. I think some estimates, after the sanctions are lifted, as many as a million barrels a day. It's my understanding they need a price point of about \$130 a barrel for them to really start balancing their books.

General PETRAEUS. Oh, I—no, I don't think so at all, Senator. Not Iran.

Senator TILLIS. So, you think it's lower than that.

General PETRAEUS. Oh, I think it's much—it's a good bit lower than that, yeah.

Senator TILLIS. I may have my—

General PETRAEUS. Yeah.

Senator TILLIS.—facts wrong. But, just conceptually—

General PETRAEUS. I mean, they wouldn't sell the extra million barrels—again, you're—

Senator TILLIS. If they didn't—

General PETRAEUS.—you're saying to—

Senator TILLIS. Let me finish—

General PETRAEUS.—for their budget?

Senator TILLIS.—the thought process.

General PETRAEUS. I think they're okay.

Senator TILLIS. Well, let me finish the thought process, though.

For—based on your military and intelligence experience, do you believe that the United States being able to also participate in the global markets and being able to export oil and other energy products to other nations who may become dependent on Iran at the

same time that Iran is benefiting economically from it, is also a strategic weapon that we should be looking at?

General PETRAEUS. Look, this is not just based on my military intelligence. I'm the chairman of the KKR Global Institute, and I'm a partner in KKR, one of the global investment firms, big private equity firms in our country. And, first of all, by the way, the analysis on crude oil exports shows that not only would the price of WTI, West Texas Intermediate, go up slightly so the producers would be better off, it would actually have an impact on Brent crude prices, which would come down—the global price—which is a lot of what we refine. And the price at the pump probably would go down. So, it's—

Senator TILLIS. So—

General PETRAEUS.—a very interesting—if you look at—I think it's the CBO that did the analysis of this. One of our analytical organizations here, I think, on Capitol Hill has looked at this. And it's a very interesting dynamic.

Senator TILLIS. And, General—

General PETRAEUS. Beyond that, I don't think we should get involved in markets, as a country, unless we want to do something like sanctions. So, again, you wouldn't do it—if you want to use sanctions or economic tools as a weapon, fine, but otherwise I think you have to be very careful about intervention in global markets.

Senator TILLIS. Mr. Chair, I apologize. I'll be brief.

The 130 number, I think, was the kind of profit they would have to throw off to also fix their fiscal problems, versus the actual market price.

But, the other question—

General PETRAEUS. Or maybe to do investment—

Senator TILLIS. That's right.

General PETRAEUS.—in the fields in the future. There's—

Senator TILLIS. That's—

General PETRAEUS.—there's something there. But, again—

Senator TILLIS. That's what I was referring to.

But, I guess, finally, I'm—I want to make sure I understand the answer to your question. Do you believe that the United States being able to extract more energy from the regions under our jurisdiction, and provide that energy, is a part of a strategic play to hedge against Iran's ability to go out, make more money, fund more malign activities, do more of the bad things they're already doing?

General PETRAEUS. Look, we ought to produce all the oil and gas that we can, if we're making a profit. If we can enable countries like Iraq to revive their oil industry as we did, it helps Iraq, it funds their government. By the way, they're running a fiscal deficit now.

But, again, we—this is really about market forces, I think, much more than getting involved in this as a country. The fact is that the energy markets right now, because of the U.S. shale gale, the oil energy revolution so far, most significant with crude oil in the global markets, and next—by the way, the next big disruption is going to be in the liquified natural gas markets because of the approval now of whatever it is, six or seven liquified natural gas (LNG) plants for the United States—they'll be—and that's going to be a huge challenge for President Putin. And, as I mentioned ear-

lier, Putin's hand is getting weaker. He's running enormous deficits, he's carrying out very costly adventures outside his country, he's got a limited amount of foreign reserves left to fund this, and he doesn't have access to the global markets, because of the sanctions on him and on the major—many of his major banks. So, I think he's got problems down the road. And, oh, by the way, when our LNG hits European markets, just as Australian LNG is hitting Asian markets, you're going to see a compression of natural gas prices, even though he's selling it off the pipeline and we'll have had to liquefy, ship, and regasify.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Shaheen.

Senator SHAHEEN. General Petraeus, thank you for being here and for your insights into what's happening in the Middle East.

I know—last week General Austin was here, and he got questioned by a number of members of this committee about the train-and-equip mission. And, unfortunately, what he had to say about that mission suggests to me, and I think to others on the committee, that it has not accomplished what it was supposed to. And I—my recollection is that you advocated for a similar kind of mission—early, before it actually started. And I wonder if you have thoughts about what can be done at this point. I think, as it has been operating, it has not been successful. So, what should we be doing? Is there any way to right it? Should we just abandon it and go on to—

General PETRAEUS. Look—

Senator SHAHEEN.—other areas?

General PETRAEUS. First of all, you can't abandon it, because anything we want to accomplish in Syria has to be enabled by a Sunni Arab force on the ground, whether it's the defeat of the Islamic State or creating a context within which the Bashar al-Assad regime might be willing to go to the negotiating table, or stemming the flow, the exodus, of refugees from Syria that is overflowing European countries.

Senator SHAHEEN. So, how—

General PETRAEUS. I think the central—

Senator SHAHEEN.—do we make it work?

General PETRAEUS.—the central issue is that we have to pledge, and then take action, to support these fighters against anybody who comes at them, whether it's ISIS, which we want them to fight, or Bashar al-Assad or Jabhat al-Nusra or even other elements. So, again, we're going to have to support them against all of these. They want to fight Bashar. We've at least got to enable them to fight Bashar's forces in a local way, without, as I mentioned in my statement, creating the conditions where Bashar goes before we have a sense of what it is that we want to see follow him or what will follow him.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

In your testimony, you talked about establishing enclaves in Syria that would be protected, which I interpreted as what's normally described as safe zones. Is that what you're—you were suggesting by the enclaves you were talking about?

General PETRAEUS. Save havens, I think, it—

Senator SHAHEEN. I had a—last—

General PETRAEUS. And, by the way, they can be in the south as well as the north. I mean, and actually there's a reasonable one in the south, I think, arguably, contiguous to Jordan.

Senator SHAHEEN. Well, last week we heard, at the Foreign Relations Committee, from Michael Powers, who—of Mercy Corps, which has done a lot of work—humanitarian work in Syria. And he expressed grave concerns about establishing safe zones. He suggested that it would be very difficult to keep them actually safe without a lot of investment of additional airpower and troops. He also thought they could become a target for extremists and that they could be used by some countries as an excuse to reject refugees. So, how does your proposal suggest we address those issues—

General PETRAEUS. Well, we're going to defend it. I mean, we have to make very—what he's saying—you just can't declare something a safe zone and expect everybody to honor that. We would have to—again, this is the key. The forces that we support aren't going to stay supportable. They won't even stay alive, as we have seen, if we don't take very active measures, have a credible campaign for them to pursue. And part of that campaign should be establishing enclaves. That's—I don't really like the word "safe zones." There's nothing safe about a safe zone, unless you're going to defend it. And the people on the ground will judge whether or not you're doing that, and they'll vote with their feet whether they're willing to stay or even come back or depart with all—a number of the others.

So, we would have to invest in supporting that zone. It doesn't mean, I don't think, that you have to have our boots on the ground in that enclave. Although, again, at some point, security is adequate, I would be comfortable doing that, just as we were comfortable doing it in Iraq.

Senator SHAHEEN. Finally, one of the things that I think we have not done as successfully as we need to is to counter the ISIL propaganda. And do you have thoughts about how we could be better responding?

General PETRAEUS. This is a really, really difficult problem because of the magnitude of it, the sheer number, the way that machines are used to amplify, to magnify. I think we've got to get smarter about that. I've talked to people at Google Ideas, for example, about various techniques that could be used on our side in the same way that they're used on their side. We did have a program at CENTCOM during part of the time that I was the Commander, where we had what we termed "credible voices." These were native speakers, sometimes dialect speakers, with academic training in various religious disciplines and so forth. And they were quite effective. The problem is that it's very costly. And again, whether that effect is really measurable is something that could be debated.

So, I think we do have to partner more effectively with those that really understand the technology. And then we have to activate those who are willing to engage in this. I don't know that it can, by any means, be all government. I just don't think we can generate the critical mass that would be sufficient for this task.

Senator SHAHEEN. My time is up, but should it be spearheaded by CENTCOM or by State Department? Or coordinated—

General PETRAEUS. The problem with it being spearheaded by State Department can be best explained by an episode when I was the CENTCOM Commander and the Under Secretary of State, high-ranking government official, came to CENTCOM to ask, I think, for \$1- or \$2 million for—from us, which we provided, somehow, to help them with their program. So, it's—State Department has never been adequately funded. I don't know if Senator Graham is here. He would—he's the subcommittee chair, I think, still—

Senator SHAHEEN. Right. He is.

General PETRAEUS.—of the key committee, and has generally agreed with that. But, we have always called for State and AID to do more, and more and more, and yet we have not given them the appropriations, nor, in some cases, the authorization to do that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Ernst.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Admiral McCain.

[Laughter.]

Senator ERNST. General Petraeus, thank you for appearing in front of the committee today.

And I think you can see, from the attendance at this committee today, that your opinions and your thoughts are very highly valued. So, thank you for sharing with us—

General PETRAEUS. Thank you.

Senator ERNST.—today your thoughts.

I would like to go back to the Kurds a little bit. I think we've talked a lot about it, and everybody's asked questions, but maybe not in all manners. So, the Kurds have been a great ally to us. And I've heard that from many of the men and women that have served in that region. They've been a great partner for 25 years or so. And they have a healthy respect for the rule of law. They've been very helpful with a number of minorities—ethnic minorities, religious minorities. And what can we do to better provide support for the Kurdish regional government, the Kurdish peshmerga? I believe we need to double down in this effort, regardless of whether they may push beyond their regional boundaries. But, they do provide an area, whether we can engage them in shaping operations, whether it is to provide an area for us to base—can you give us some thoughts?

General PETRAEUS. I—

Senator ERNST. The advantages—

General PETRAEUS. I can. The fact is, we are based there. As you know, we have headquarters, we have operational headquarters, we have very close relationships. In both my military and intel lives, we were very, very closely linked.

I think the single biggest issues are the provision of weapons and other supplies, to streamline that. You know, I've said we have to support Prime Minister Abadi. We need to strengthen him. That means we can't bypass him on these issues. But, we need to figure out how to get this so that, ideally, it doesn't have to touch down in Baghdad, it can go directly to them. Some coalition members are doing that, I think, actually, with—

Senator ERNST. They are, correct.

General PETRAEUS.—our tacit approval, if not applause. I think that's the single biggest step that we could take, and to look very

carefully at what it is we're providing. And there are some additional items—again, I was in—happened to be there for a conference in Sulaymaniyah, back in the earlier part of this year, and had a lot of people come and plead that particular case.

The other is to determine—you know, the KRG, the Kurdish Regional Government, is in very, very difficult financial times right now because of the price of oil going down by 55 percent. It's not only reduced what they get, but it's reduced the amount from which the 17 percent that they get from the central government is. And so, they're having a very difficult time. They're supporting hundreds of thousands of refugees on their soil. Anybody who goes up there and flies over this will see a camp every few kilometers. And, indeed, they're fighting a war. And again, if we could provide additional assistance to them that would be of support, I think that would be very valuable, also.

We have very much enabled them. We helped them hold off—had it not been for decisive action, actually, at a critical moment last year, it's very possible that the Islamic State might have gotten closer to the capital of Erbil. That held that off, and then has really retaken most of the area around the Kurdish Regional Government. And, candidly, there are no more disputed internal boundary areas in Iraq. They are generally controlled by the Kurdish Regional Government as a result of the operations that have taken place with our support.

Senator ERNST. Very good. I appreciate those thoughts very much. I would tend to agree.

I would love to see more assistance going to the KRG, of course, in consultation with the Iraqi government. I applaud you on that, as well.

If we could turn to Turkey, just very briefly, we've talked a little bit about the fact that they have mobilized. And, unfortunately, what we have seen is that, through their mobilization of resources, whether it's political, military, instead of really pushing back against ISIS, we see there's been a turn to mobilize against PKK. And what do you see the impact is to those coalition forces, the anti-ISIS coalition forces? And what are the greater implications of that, and thoughts, maybe, from some of those coalition members?

General PETRAEUS. I don't know that this has a huge effect on U.S. or coalition forces. They're not being diverted to assist. There's a certain—slight degree of support that we have provided in the past in the intelligence realm that I don't imagine has changed a great deal. What I think is very significant is what's happening within Turkey as a result of this. The sheer escalation of the violence, a situation that was relatively calm and seemed to be heading toward one in which there was greater and greater reconciliation between the government in Ankara and the sizable part of their population in Turkey that is Kurdish, with the allowance of certain—meeting certain desires of that Kurdish population. And all of a sudden, the wheels have come off the bus. And whether this is connected with a future election in Turkey or something else, it is very distressing to see, because, again, the violence on both sides now has escalated very, very rapidly and quite considerably.

Senator ERNST. Great. Thank you.

My time is expired. Thank you, General.

Thank you, Admiral.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator KING.

Senator KING. General, first, courage is an element of character. And courage to admit mistakes, particularly in an open forum such as you did at the beginning of your testimony today, to me is a huge indicator of character, which I think is the essential quality of leadership. And I want to compliment and acknowledge that you did something that wasn't easy this morning. And it's very meaningful.

Question about Russia and Syria. The recent buildup of Russian troops, of course, is very worrisome. On the other hand, Russia was—you should pardon the expression—an ally when it came to getting rid of the chemical weapons. Is there a geopolitical opportunity where Russia may recognize the danger of ISIS to them, to Chechnya and to the—that ideology—and there could be common cause with them, not to dump Assad precipitously, but to work on a negotiated agreement, where Assad would be moved aside? Because Assad is ISIS's evil twin. He brought them into being.

General PETRAEUS. Exactly. And continues to inspire the recruiting and the—it's a magnetic attraction.

Senator KING. Exactly. So, talk to me about the possibility of talks with the Russians seeing—I believe countries act in their interests. And, in this case, they have an interest in not seeing ISIS metamorphose into terrorism in their country. Do—is there an opportunity here for working in concert with the Russians to move Assad aside, perhaps guaranteeing their presence? You mentioned the bases on the Mediterranean.

General PETRAEUS. This is not something I'd rule out at all, Senator. I think, again, there's no question they have an interest. They're worried about the effect on—in the Caucasuses. There are Chechens that are down, fighting, without question, in Syria. There's a worry, of course, they'll go back, presumably, and be more effective. So, the problem is, if they had wanted to have done this, if that was really their goal in life, they could have contacted the coalition of more than 60 countries and said, "Where could you bed down our aircraft? How can you integrate us into the air tasking order? We'd like to drop bombs on ISIS, just like you guys."

Senator KING. It appears——

General PETRAEUS. And, of course——

Senator KING.—that these recent moves, they've simply said, "We're going to shore up Assad, no matter what."

General PETRAEUS. It—well, it's really—again, you—you're right. This is about national interest, and their national interest is to preserve the naval base that they have at—in Tartus, down——

Senator KING. So, perhaps there's a way to——

General PETRAEUS.—down on the coast——

Senator KING. Perhaps there's a way to assure——

General PETRAEUS.—and then Latakia, the airbase.

Senator KING. Perhaps there's a way to assure that without necessarily guaranteeing the presence of Assad.

General PETRAEUS. There could be, at some point. Again, if there are serious negotiations. It's not the kind of thing that you would just rule out unequivocally. The—this is real complicated right now, though, and if they really enter the fight on the side of Assad,

rather than just sort of protecting, again, this coastal enclave that matters to them, strategically, geostrategically, then we're going to see real complications. And, ultimately, you could end up—you don't want to be in direct conflict.

You know, I'm—look, Russia is an important power. It has carried out very provocative actions. It doesn't mean that we need to be provocative in return, but we do need to be firm in return. We do need to establish what is unacceptable actions—Ukraine, as an example. And we have to do that here, but we've got to see this develop a bit further, recognizing, again, that there is a very clear way for them, if they just wanted to attack ISIS, and that would be to join the coalition.

Senator KING. Changing the subject. You talked about barrel bombs and airpower. Is there an alternative—and I'm keenly—I'm very aware of the problem, but an alternative closely vetted Syrian opposition with MANPADs or similar weapons, which could neutralize Assad's air force without mobilizing a major air war and coordinated strikes and essentially escalating the conflict? In other words, you—

General PETRAEUS. The—

Senator KING.—you can take care of barrel bombers from the ground or from the air.

General PETRAEUS. This has been an issue in virtually any of these kinds of endeavors that we've—

Senator KING. Since Afghanistan.

General PETRAEUS.—engaged in. Exactly. And the concern, of course, is that one gets out of hands and drifts over somewhere else and takes down a civil airliner. And so, the risk in this has to be very, very carefully measured and mitigated. There are some techniques, some technologies, some other things that can be employed. I'm not sure that we have not done that or that other countries have not done that. I—but, it's a very risky proposition. And we would—we have to do—exercise enormous caution if we employ that.

Senator KING. And those mitigation factors would be crucial. Final—

General PETRAEUS. Yes.

Senator KING.—question. Do people wake up in Iraq and think of themselves as Iraqis, or as Sunnis and Shiites, or as Kurds?

General PETRAEUS. Sadly, I think, in recent times, it is more their sectarian or ethnic identity, rather than Iraqi. Having said that, I remember when the Iraqi soccer team won the—I think it was the Asia Cup, and that night there were cheers all the way from Basrah through Baghdad to Erbil. So, there can be unifying features.

And let's never forget, the most important centrifugal force in Iraq is still there, and that is the distribution of the oil revenues by the central government to the provinces, the ministries, and so forth, including the Kurdish Regional Government.

Senator KING. Thank you. Thank you, General.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Sullivan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, General, good to see you again. I also want to echo what Senator King said about your comments earlier. We very much ap-

preciate you being here, and what you did, what you've done for the country.

I wanted to just talk a little bit—I know there's been a lot written on the surge and what you did, and what the Chairman and others did, with regard to that important strategy. To me, it's an example of where you have a strategy, you have rhetoric, and then you actually have action. And what I mean by "rhetoric" is, we—you know, the President and others announced what we are going to do, and then we took action. And I think one of the broader strategic failures right now that certainly we're seeing with all the chaos in the world is that we—in many ways, as a country at the high levels, whether it's the President or the Secretary of Defense or others—we're talking about things—redlines in Syria, Bashar al-Assad's got to go—even Secretary Carter gave what I thought was a very powerful speech at the Shangri-la dialogue—

General PETRAEUS. I was there.

Senator SULLIVAN.—when we were out there.

General PETRAEUS. Right.

Senator SULLIVAN.—on the built-up islands in the South China Sea. But, the—but, none of these statements have been followed up by action, unlike what you did with the surge. What happens when, as a country, we talk a lot, but don't act?

General PETRAEUS. Well, first of all, I think we have taken action. And I have to be somebody who sits here and says that I—

Senator SULLIVAN. Where have we—on those three examples—

General PETRAEUS. We killed Osama bin Laden—

Senator SULLIVAN. No, no, I just gave you—I gave three examples.

General PETRAEUS. Well, no—but, I was merely going to say that this is not a record of unmitigated lack of action. But, in my statement, I said that inaction—in some cases, inaction has consequences. And I think that is the case with some of the cases that we're dealing with in Syria, without question.

Senator SULLIVAN. So, what do you think happens when we don't take action?

General PETRAEUS. Well, if you do not act—

Senator SULLIVAN. If you say—if you make a statement—

General PETRAEUS.—others may. Others will question. Again, you know, the art of this is figuring out when to take action and, of course, what action to take. This is not an argument that you should always take action, everywhere, all the time. As I said—

Senator SULLIVAN. But, shouldn't you take action if you—

General PETRAEUS.—we can't solve all the problems.

Senator SULLIVAN. Should you take action if you're actually—what I'm talking about is not just random action. I'm talking about—

General PETRAEUS. Sure.

Senator SULLIVAN.—to implement stated policies that you've already announced as a country. Are you hearing, in your travels throughout the world, that the United States is losing credibility, in terms of our national security and foreign policy?

General PETRAEUS. Look, there are some questions out there. And what I was going to do was point out where there have been actions, because there—this is not, again, a record of no action.

There have been some very, very courageous actions. I took very tough issues to this President, and he took action. There have also been some that—on which there was not action. And if those in which there is not action taken really matter, then, obviously, again, there are consequences. They accumulate.

I do think that the Syrian redline that was not a redline, which had a decent outcome in the end, as was pointed out—you know, 90 percent or so of the chemical weapons gone. But, the way we got to that was quite a circuitous path. And to be bailed out by President Putin, at the end of the day, was, again, a very interesting outcome. That is not the kind of case, I don't think, that instills—you know, and again, a great sense of confidence in the United States.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask another—in terms of actions. You know, in another area of the world, in the Arctic, we're seeing a lot of strategic interest from the Russians and other nations, for reasons of natural resources, transportation routes. And you've seen a really pretty dramatic aggressive move by the Russians, in terms of a new Arctic military command, four new BCTs there, 40 icebreakers, a lot of heated rhetoric there. And then, in terms of the United States action, if we were to remove a—our substantial Arctic forces, say the only airborne BCT in the entire Arctic or Asia Pacific, what do you think that would do, in terms of additional Russian reactions in that part of the world?

General PETRAEUS. I'm just not—I have expertise in a reasonable number of places in the world, but I'll defer to you on the Arctic, I'm afraid.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay, let me ask one final question, General. You know, I think there's a bit of a strategic irony going on, where some of us think that, in certain parts of the world, we're withdrawing. And yet, when you look at—and you and I have talked about the instruments of American power, not only the military, but things like energy that we've talked about, the ability, in terms of finance, the ability—resurgence of manufacturing in the United States, best universities in the world, by far. I mean, the list—agriculture—the list is very, very strong, where we have so many advantages over other countries, whether it's China, whether it's Russia—long-term advantages. How do we utilize those in a way that show that we still are the country holding all the cards in—on so many different instruments of power that countries measure power by?

General PETRAEUS. Well, first of all, we don't all the cards, but rumors of America's demise have been greatly exaggerated, to paraphrase Mark Twain. I teach a course called "The Coming North American Decades" at the Honors College of the City University of New York. I've just done a monograph at Harvard as a Fellow, again, on "The Great New Emerging Economy: North America." When I was asked, a year or so ago, in London, "After the American Century, what?"—and I think they asked—expected me to say, "The Asian Century" or "The Chinese Century." I said "The North American Decades."

The bottom line is that our economy is fundamentally—it's got lots of challenges and there's a lot of issues that we need to resolve, some with the help of this body, working together with the other

body. All that notwithstanding as—at a time when the number-two economy is slowing down quite significantly, we don't yet see the rise of India, the Eurozone has got a very differentiated recovery. The U.S. has continued—we may be in the longest recovery in our history. It has not achieved escape velocity. There's aspects of it, again, that are not great. But, when you look at the rest of the world, and when you look at the fundamentals of the United States, whether it's demography compared to the others, whether it is the values that we share with our two neighbors—I mean, you don't see Mexico asking China to pivot to North America to help them balance against the United States the way every country that has a maritime boundary with China is doing to us.

So, there are enormous strengths here in this country. You enumerated a number of them. I've laid them out elsewhere. There are a number of actions that this body, again, could take to address issues that are really headwinds to us capitalizing on this tremendous opportunity, because of the Energy Revolution, foremost, but also the IT Revolution, which enables all the others, the Manufacturing Revolution that's now beginning to gather steam, and the Life Sciences Revolution, which is starting to gather momentum, as well. We are the leaders, or among the leaders, in every one of these areas. And we have a number of really great, again, fundamentals here that are going to keep this country and North America, writ large, in a very enviable position. I would not want to be in any other economy than this one right here. And I now get paid to analyze those kinds of factors and elements.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator MCCAIN. Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. General, thank you very much for a lifetime of extraordinary service under difficult circumstances.

General PETRAEUS. And thanks to you for yours. As I noted in a response to—

Senator GRAHAM. Yes, sir.

General PETRAEUS.—a local newspaper's article here, you served nine stints under my command in Iraq, CENTCOM, and Afghanistan alone, each of those as a week or a bit longer. I was very skeptical before the first one. I didn't—

Senator GRAHAM. Yeah.

General PETRAEUS.—appreciate the great opportunity we were going to have.

Senator MCCAIN. We can understand the skepticism.

[Laughter.]

General PETRAEUS. And—yes—and, under duress, I accepted Colonel Lindsey Graham of the Judge Advocate General Corps of the U.S. Air Force Reserve, and I must say that, after every single one of those visits, you came back and provided a real nugget and one of these big ideas that helped us come to grips with one of the serious issues we were confronting, starting with issues that we had at Camp Bucca, as you'll recall, in Iraq, and carrying all the way through various legal conundrums that we had with President Karzai in Afghanistan.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, thank you. You've certainly made my day. And it was a very small contribution, and it—

General PETRAEUS. And I am nonpartisan, by the way——

[Laughter.]

General PETRAEUS.—Mr. Chairman. I—really. Honestly.

Senator GRAHAM. But, I really appreciate that. The bottom line is, I enjoyed the heck out of it, and I learned a lot under your command and working with people in the region.

So, let's try to see if we can make some sense out of the world as it is. There's two things going on at once, I think, in the Middle East: a fight for the heart and soul of Islam and a demand for social justice, particularly by young people and women. Do you agree with that?

General PETRAEUS. Certainly among the two biggest issues. I don't know if—I'd put some economic issues that might be in the social justice category, but that one be another element that's——

Senator GRAHAM. The only reason I mention this—I just want the American people to understand that young people are not going to live in dictatorships for our convenience any longer. Do you agree with that?

General PETRAEUS. They're not doing it for our convenience, to begin with, but I think what—the real point here is that the age of the——

Senator GRAHAM. Yes.

General PETRAEUS.—dictators is certainly under a certain degree of strain. And we've seen it boil over in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria—some degree, Yemen.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, would you agree that America should take sides in this struggle, and side with young people and say, "Yes, you're right to demand a larger voice about your children if you're a mother, you're right to want more economic opportunity." We should say—we should embrace what they're asking for.

General PETRAEUS. Yeah, I don't know that I would do this as a universal declaration, but I would certainly have that in the back of my mind as I looked at each——

Senator GRAHAM. Well——

General PETRAEUS.—each and every case.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, I'm going to do it as a universal declaration. That's just me, though.

Now, on the other side of Islam, there's a—do you agree with me that most Muslims reject radical Islam?

General PETRAEUS. Yes. Yeah.

Senator GRAHAM. And that is a—to suggest otherwise, you really don't understand the region—that the biggest victim of radical Islam is other people in the faith.

General PETRAEUS. It's generally Muslims.

Senator GRAHAM. Yeah. And you have been there more than anyone I know. Don't you agree with me that the good news for all of us is that we can partner with people within the faith who are willing to partner with us and destroy this radical ideology? And it's going to require these partnerships.

General PETRAEUS. Correct. I mean, we have sought to do that. We have done that. We do it——

Senator GRAHAM. So, when people say they're——

General PETRAEUS.—in our own country.

Senator GRAHAM.—all the same, they don't know what they're talking about. You have seen——

General PETRAEUS. I'm a Presbyterian. I don't think all Presbyterians are the same, either, frankly.

Senator GRAHAM. Good. Good. Nor do I, General.

But, the point I'm trying to make, for people to look at the Mid-east as "everybody's the same, everybody is radical," they miss the boat. Most fathers and mothers don't want to give their daughters to ISIL.

General PETRAEUS. Correct.

Senator GRAHAM. So, that is something we need to build upon.

In terms of Iraq, the President has said the goal is to degrade and destroy ISIL. That is the right goal. Do you agree?

General PETRAEUS. "Destroy" is a very high bar in the military lexicon, and I think it's actually been lowered slightly to "defeat," which I think is adequate.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

General PETRAEUS. I'd love to destroy them, as well. We did destroy al-Qaeda in Iraq, I think——

Senator GRAHAM. You——

General PETRAEUS.—it's safe to say.

Senator GRAHAM.—certainly did. And I want——

General PETRAEUS. And, sadly, they were able to resurrect themselves in the form of ISIS, and then gain strength in Syria and come back into Iraq.

Senator GRAHAM. Absolutely. Now—but we are where we are. The surge——

General PETRAEUS. Right.

Senator GRAHAM.—didn't work, and it was a marvelous thing to witness.

Do you believe more American ground forces would help lead to the defeat of ISIL in Iraq?

General PETRAEUS. What I've laid out here today is, indeed, a requirement for additional forces—not ground combat forces.

Senator GRAHAM. I agree.

General PETRAEUS. Additional advisors at brigade headquarters level, probably augmentation at—what's going to happen is, you know, you will get a critical mass, at some point, of Sunni forces. And it will start off—set off a chain reaction, as we did when we had the——

Senator GRAHAM. Sure.

General PETRAEUS.—the Anbar Awakening, where we—it rippled up and down the Euphrates River, then ultimately it goes up the Tigris. We have to be prepared to capitalize on that. And I suspect we'll have more training locations, more locations where we'll have advisors in assistance.

Senator GRAHAM. Right. But, would a couple of aviation battalions help—Army aviation battalions?

General PETRAEUS. It would help. You're going to incur greater risk, obviously——

Senator GRAHAM. Definitely.

General PETRAEUS.—and you're now getting into the—into this in a way—we have, obviously, attack helicopters, which we have employed.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

General PETRAEUS. Now you're starting to add numbers quite considerably, and I'd be concerned about possible ramifications of that.

Senator GRAHAM. And I—I'm over, but I do want to talk about Syria. Is there anyone left to train in Syria that would have the capability to both destroy ISIL and push Assad out? Is there an indigenous force left to train?

General PETRAEUS. I think there are forces that, if we pledge to support them against everybody, not just the—fight the Islamic State—and start off by actually allowing them to solidify control over an enclave—

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

General PETRAEUS.—before we launch them or push them into an offensive—

Senator GRAHAM. What about a regional force? Would you support the creation of a regional force with two goals in mind: to destroy ISIL and push Assad out?

General PETRAEUS. I'd have concerns about that. I think that—

Senator GRAHAM. What concerns?

General PETRAEUS.—to have neighbors go into one of the countries in this region—again, every country is different, and—but, to go into a country that is as already fractured as is Syria, I think there are some complications with that.

Senator GRAHAM. Finally, Assad should go? He must go?

General PETRAEUS. He has to go, ultimately.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

General PETRAEUS. But, the keyword there is “ultimately,” underscored and bold letters, because, until we have a sense of what will replace him, we need to be very careful not to push him out, because what comes after could actually be even worse.

Senator GRAHAM. How many people do you think are left that would be willing to fight both ISIL and Assad? And how long would it take to train this indigenous force? And would you have American boots on the ground as part of that training?

General PETRAEUS. I—I'd put them, certainly, on the ground, first in Turkey and Jordan. I'd certainly be willing to put them into an enclave, when it's solidified, secure, and you're not going to put people in jeopardy of ending up in an orange jumpsuit in a cage.

Senator GRAHAM. Right. But, do—how long do you think it would take to—

General PETRAEUS. I don't know, Senator. Again, you give me the assumptions, and I could give you a timeline. But, again, there's a host of assumptions that we'd have to make before we could get any precision on that.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you very much.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, Senator.

Senator REED [presiding]. General, on behalf of Chairman McCain, let me thank you for your extraordinary testimony, insightful and thought provoking as always, and also for your incredible service to the country. And one thing that always impressed me about you is that your dedication to the men and women you led was unshakeable, and everything you did was about those young soldiers and sailors and marines and airmen. Thank you, sir.

General PETRAEUS. Thank you, Senator.

Senator REED. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:23 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

UNITED STATES MILITARY STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2015

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:02 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator John McCain (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators McCain, Inhofe, Sessions, Wicker, Ayotte, Fischer, Cotton, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Lee, Graham, Reed, Nelson, McCaskill, Manchin, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Hirono, Kaine, King, and Heinrich.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman MCCAIN. Good morning. The committee meets today to receive testimony on United States Strategy in the Middle East.

I want to thank our distinguished witnesses for appearing this morning and for their service to our Nation.

Before I proceed, I'd like to remind our witnesses, this committee's rules require written testimony to be submitted 24 hours in advance of a hearing, and I'd like, from now on, to try—for our witness to try to adhere to that.

The tragic loss last week of Master Sergeant Joshua Walker, a veteran of 14 combat deployments, reminds us of the high stakes of our mission in the Middle East and how grateful we are to those Americans serving there. We need a strategy worthy of those who carry it out. Unfortunately, we don't have that.

What's worse, it appears the administration has not even defined the problem correctly. A policy of "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) first" fails to understand that ISIL, for all of the threat it poses, is actually just a symptom of a deeper problem, the struggle for power and sectarian identity now raging across the Middle East, the epicenter of which is Iraq and Syria. That is why ISIL exists today with the strength that it does. This problem will only get worse the longer this conflict rages on.

We hear it said all the time, quote, "There is no military solution to this problem," which is a truism. But, that, too, is misleading. The real problem is that there can be no diplomatic solution without leverage, and there is a clear military dimension to this problem. Secretary Kerry can take all the trips he wants to Geneva, but, unless the military balance of power changes on the ground, diplomacy, as has been amply proven, will achieve nothing. Changing those conditions is what the administration has consistently

failed to do. Instead, it is assumed our Nation could withdraw from the Middle East and avoid the conflict at its heart. Moreover, on those occasions when the administration has felt compelled to respond, after the use of chemical weapons, for example, or with the rise of ISIL, and now amid the worst refugee crisis in Europe since World War II, the administration has merely addressed the symptoms of the underlying problem rather than the problem itself, and, all too often, made that problem worse.

There is no clearer example of this than the Syrian train-and-equip (T&E) program. From the start, the administration said the fighters in this program could only fight ISIL, not Bashar Assad's forces, which have slaughtered and displaced exponentially more Syrians than ISIL has. In addition, the administration made no commitment, until only recently, to provide these forces with any meaningful military support once they returned to Syria. After millions of dollars and months of effort, the program failed to come anywhere close to the Department's original expectations.

The President has expressed surprise about this failure. It was not a surprise. It was completely predictable, and many of us here did predict it. Only someone who does not understand the real problem, which is the underlying conflict in Syria and Iraq, or does not care to, could think that we could effectively recruit and train large numbers of Sunni Syrians to fight only against ISIL, with no promise of coalition assistance if they came under fire from Assad's forces. Rather than fixing the problem, the President suspended it. But, this is tantamount to killing the program, because it's destroying what little trust our Syrian partners have left in us, to say nothing of allies like Turkey and Jordan, which invested their own money and prestige in this program.

The President now says, incredibly, the failure of this program—his program—the President's program—proves he was right for not wanting to do it in the first place. Harry Truman must be spinning in his grave. If there is an opposite for Commander in Chief, this is it.

The training and effort in—the training effort in Iraq has its own challenges. Indeed, it is *deja vu* all over again. We don't have enough United States forces to train and advise Iraqi units at the right levels. We're still not providing sufficient support to Sunni tribes, which are the center of gravity in this fight against ISIL. We're looking the other way as Shi'a militias go on the offensive in the Sunni heartland. We hear complaints that Iraqis have no will to fight, but, we're prohibiting United States forces from bolstering their will to fight by advising them in combat or calling in airstrikes. We learned all of these lessons in Iraq just a few years ago, and apparently we have to relive these failures now.

For nearly seven years, the administration has tried to extract America from the Middle East. Instead, we have created a massive power vacuum that has been filled by ISIL, al-Qaeda and its affiliates, on the one hand, and Iran and its proxies, on the other. Now into this vacuum has stepped Vladimir Putin. Putin's intervention in Syria really began in Ukraine. The administration's failure to impose greater costs on Russia, particularly by providing defensive arms to Ukrainian forces, allowed Putin to annex Crimea, dictate the terms of a frozen conflict in eastern Ukraine, and then pivot

to Syria. It's also confirmed Putin's belief that the administration is weak. To Putin, weakness is provocative.

The administration's response, thus far, to Russia's intervention in Syria has only made this problem worse. First, it urged Russia not to build up its forces in Syria. Putin ignored these warnings. The administration then tried to deny Russia the airspace to move into Syria. Failed. Putin responded by bombing moderate Syrian forces, many of whom are allied with the United States. What has been the result? The number of United States airstrikes in Syria has dropped. The train-and-equip program in Syria was halted just as it was starting to show some battlefield results. The administration scrambled to pen a so-called "deconfliction agreement" with the Russians that spells out more of what we will not do in Syria. Indeed, this agreement means the United States is now moving out of the way and watching as Russian aircraft, together with Iranian, Hezbollah, and Assad's ground forces, attack and kill brave Syrians, many of whom our Nation has supported and encouraged. This is not only harmful to our interests, it is immoral.

What we must do to hasten the end of the conflict in Syria and Iraq, in particular, we must stop Assad's use of airpower and his horrific barrel bombs, which are the major killer of Syrians and driver of refugees out of the region. We must establish areas in Syria where civilians can be safe and do what is necessary to protect these areas in the air and on the ground. We must recognize that Putin is not interested in a negotiated solution in Syria that favors United States interests, so, we should, instead, impose real costs on Russia, not just in Syria, but everywhere we have leverage to do so. Finally, as General David Petraeus has recently said, we must devise a strategy to confront Iranian power and designs in the region rather than acquiescing to them.

Some will object, as they have for years, that we cannot bear the costs of these actions. But, consider the costs of our current inaction and half measures. Mass atrocities in Syria will continue. Our allies and partners in the Middle East will be put at greater risk of existential danger. Europe will continue to be destabilized and consumed by the internal challenge of managing the refugee challenge. The cancer of ISIL will grow more potent and spread across more of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, posing a greater threat to our national security. Iran will be emboldened in its pursuit of its malign regional ambitions. Putin will establish Russia as a dominant military power in the Middle East for the first time in four decades. All the while, America's credibility and influence will continue to erode.

Make no mistake, this is the course we are now on. This will be the consequences of our current policy. No one believes there are easy answers to the underlying problems in the Middle East, but this much should be clear: We cannot go on pretending that we can somehow avoid these problems or that the current approach of trying to treat the symptoms of the disease, rather than its cause, will work if only we give it more time. It will not. Policies of gradual escalation never do.

Senator Reed.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Let me join the Chairman in welcoming back the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Thank you, gentlemen, for your service.

Today's hearings comes in the midst of a series of events altering the security situation in the Middle East. These include a massive wave of refugees fleeing the continued violence on the ground in Syria and Iraq, the deployment of Russian air and ground forces in Syria, the suspected ISIL attack in Turkey that killed over 100 people and injured hundreds more during a peace rally in Ankara, and the deployment recently of Lieutenant General Sean McFarland, the new commander of Operation Inherent Resolve, Secretary John Kerry's recent meetings with the Foreign Ministers of Russia, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. In addition, the hearing also comes only weeks before the G20 summit in Turkey, where these issues and the international response will be at the forefront.

General McFarland has been in the command of military operations in Syria and Iraq for a little more than 45 days. I understand that he has used this time to evaluate the situation on the ground and may be recommending changes to the campaign. General McFarland's arrival comes at a critical time, as the coalition military campaign requires a reevaluation of our strategy.

In Syria, the coalition faces a series of intermingled conflicts, including the counter-ISIL fight, the Syrian civil war, a regional proxy war between the Gulf states and Iran, a sectarian Sunni-Shi'a conflict, our counterterrorism fight, and the intervention of Russia, a potential great power struggle. Considering these challenges, it is important that we continually assess the role of our Nation's military in helping to bring about the conditions for an acceptable and sustainable settlement.

In Iraq, the recent visit by Chairman Dunford and General Austin have focused attention on the coalition's effort to train and equip the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). However, taken as a whole, the ISF have not shown the will to make necessary advances in the operation to take Ramadi, for example. The political leaders in Baghdad have not made the progress needed in the broader agenda of improving the inclusiveness of the Iraqi government and addressing the longstanding grievances of Kurds, Sunnis, moderate Shi'a, and minorities.

The recent operation by Kurdish Peshmerga forces, accompanied by United States Special Operations Forces in northern Iraq, despite the tragic loss of one of our finest soldiers, demonstrated that such targeted efforts can have significant success in protecting innocent civilians and degrading ISIL. These kinds of operations can also result in critical intelligence to support the coalition's broader campaign against ISIL. While these operations are obviously not without risk, the time may have come to evaluate whether the tempo of such counter-ISIL operations can be increased and whether our troops can play an even more active role in enabling the ISF, including by accompanying their forces at lower echelons, especially when direct contact with the enemy is not expected.

According to reports, the coalition's provisions of close air support to Syrian Kurdish forces have shown success in northern Syria.

The recent decision by the administration to equip a group of Sunni tribes who have come together to form a Syrian Arab coalition to fight alongside Syrian Kurdish forces shows promise for placing additional pressure on ISIL in Raqqa and the surrounding areas. If successful, this would be a positive development towards the objectives of the broader campaign. However, I am concerned that the decision to completely suspend the Department's overt train-and-equip program may not enable us to accomplish our goals in Syria. Where the program clearly failed to live up to heightened expectations, my understanding is that the Combined Joint Inter-agency Task Force had recently recalibrated the program based on lessons learned, and that later graduates today are having a direct impact as enablers in the fight against ISIL. The coalition cannot succeed in Syria without a reliable Sunni force on the ground to hold any territorial gains. Building this force will require time and patience. Critically, it will require the building of trust through training engagements and persistent contact between the coalition and our new partners on the ground. I hope the Secretary and the Chairman will provide the committee a clear understanding of the conditions required to reengage in training of vetted individuals or small groups.

The deployment of Russian forces in Syria, and their indiscriminate military operations targeting the moderate opposition, have the potential to set off another wave of refugees across Europe. More specifically, Russia's military operations in Syria have complicated the coalition air campaign and have the potential to draw the attention of moderate Syrian operation—opposition forces, rather, away from counter-ISIL operations. Russian operations have also negatively impacted the distribution of humanitarian and other nonlethal aid to the Syrian people.

In the coming months, I hope General McFarland will be provided with the operational flexibility to implement necessary modifications to the campaign against ISIL. Secretary Carter and Chairman Dunford, I would be interested in your recommendations for how to ensure that General McFarland receives the operational flexibility and support needed to be successful, going forward.

Thank you, and I look forward to your testimony.

Chairman MCCAIN. Welcome the witnesses.

Secretary Carter.

STATEMENT OF HON. ASHTON B. CARTER, SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Secretary CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Reed, members of the committee. Thanks for inviting us to come here today before you to discuss the counter-ISIL campaign in Iraq and Syria, and, along the way, to address some of the concerns, Mr. Chairman, that you raised, and to share with you, Senator Reed, some of the plans and initiatives that the Chairman and I are formulating for our campaign in both Iraq and Syria.

This is the first time, for me, appearing before this committee alongside Chairman Joe Dunford, who was just in the region last week, as was noted. I'm grateful to Joe for answering my and the President's call to step down from what every marine knows is a higher position—namely, Commandant of the Marine Corps—to be-

come Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. To this committee, for conforming Joe, thank you.

I'm glad to have you here with me today.

Before I turn to the subject of today's hearing, I want to reiterate, as I've said consistently since March and continue to believe, that Washington needs to come together behind a multiyear budget deal that supports our defense strategy, the troops and their families, and all elements of Americans' national security and strength. I understand significant progress was made on this overnight, and I'm looking forward to reviewing the details. But, I welcome this major positive development, and applaud the members of this committee for what you're doing to help us get there.

The Middle East presents a kaleidoscope of challenges. But, there, as everywhere, our actions and strong military posture are guided by what's in America's interests. That's our North Star. Amid this region's complexity and uncertainty, those interests are to deter aggression, to bolster the security of our friends and allies, especially Israel, to ensure freedom of navigation in the Gulf, to check Iran's malign influence even as we monitor the implementation of a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL. This last one, ISIL, poses a threat to our people and to friendly countries, not only in the Middle East, but around the world.

Today, I will, first, outline the changes in the execution of our strategy that we have considered and are now pursuing militarily to gather battlefield momentum in the fight against ISIL. Then I'll address what Russia is doing in Syria and why we won't let it interfere with our campaign against ISIL.

When I last spoke to this committee about our counter-ISIL campaign and its nine lines of essential military and nonmilitary effort, I made three things clear about the military aspects: first, that we will deliver ISIL a lasting defeat; second, that truly lasting success would require enabling capable, motivated local forces on the ground, recognizing that this will take time and new diplomatic energy; and third, that our strategy's execution can and must and will be strengthened. All that's still true. Our determination is unchanged even as the situation continues to evolve and we continue to adapt to execute our campaign more effectively. Today, I'd like to elaborate on the third point and explain how we're adapting our campaign to do more, reinforcing what we know works.

The changes we're pursuing can be described what I—by what I call “the three R's”: Raqqa, Ramadi, and raids. Before I explain what they mean, let me also note that I took actions to streamline command and control of the counter-ISIL military campaign by assigning the entire effort to a single general officer, Lieutenant General Sean McFarland, where, in the urgency of the early phase of the campaign last year, several layers were added to the general officer already present in Iraq.

The first “R” is Raqqa, ISIL's stronghold and administrative capital. We've been clear for some time that we need to keep up pressure on Raqqa. To that end, we will support moderate Syrian forces fighting ISIL that have made territorial gains near Raqqa. Indeed, some of them are within 30 miles of Raqqa today. The Syrian Arab coalition, which we plan to strengthen through our new equipping

approach—more on that in a moment—will work over time with other Syrian anti-ISIL forces to push towards Raqqa. To the south, we plan to further strengthen our partner, Jordan. From the skies above, we expect to intensify our air campaign, including with additional United States and coalition aircraft, to target ISIL with a higher and heavier rate of strikes. This will include more strikes against ISIL high-value targets as our intelligence improves, also its oil enterprise, which is a critical pillar of ISIL's financial infrastructure. As I said last Friday, we've already begun to ramp up these deliberate strikes.

Part of this pressure includes our new approach to the Syria train-and-equip program. I, like President Obama and members of this committee, was disappointed with that program's results. We, accordingly, examined the program this summer and have since changed it. I use the word "change," not "end." "Change" the program. While the old approach was to train and equip completely new forces outside of Syria before sending them into the fight, the new approach is to work with vetted leaders of groups that are already fighting ISIL, and provide equipment and some training to them, and support their operations with airpower. This approach builds on successes that local Syrian Arab and Syrian Kurdish forces have made along Syria's northern border to retake and hold ground from ISIL with the help of United States airstrikes and equipment resupplies. If done in concert, as we intend, all these actions on the ground and from the air should help shrink ISIL's territory into a smaller and smaller area and create new opportunities for targeting ISIL, ultimately denying this evil movement any safe haven in its supposed heartland.

The second "R" is Ramadi, the capital of Iraq's Anbar Province, which serves as a critical example of the Abadi government's commitment to work with local Sunni communities, with our help, to retake and hold ground from ISIL, and, in turn, to build momentum to eventually go northward to Mosul. Under Prime Minister Abadi's leadership, the Iraqis have begun to use American-made F-16s to support counter-ISIL operations, and have empowered capable battlefield commanders to step forward. As we see more progress towards assembling capable and motivated Iraqi forces under Baghdad's control and including Sunni elements, we're willing to continue to provide more enabling capabilities and fire support to help them succeed. However, the Iraqi government and security forces will have to take certain steps militarily to make sure our progress sticks.

We need to see more in the direction of multisectarian governance and defense leadership. For example, we've given the Iraqi government two battalions' worth of equipment for mobilizing Sunni tribal forces. As we continue to provide the support, the Iraqi government must ensure it is distributed effectively. Local Sunni forces aren't sufficiently equipped, regularly paid, and empowered as coequal members of the Iraqi Security Forces, ISIL's defeats in Anbar will only be temporary.

The third and final "R" is raids, signaling that we won't hold back from supporting capable partners in opportunistic attacks against ISIL or conducting such missions directly, whether by strikes from the air or direct action on the ground. Last week's res-

cue operation was led by Iraqi Kurdish forces with United States advisors in support. One of those accompanying advisors, Master Sergeant Joshua Wheeler, heroically acted to ensure the overall success of the mission, and lost his life in the process. The death of any servicemember is a tragedy. As I told his family and teammates this weekend, we offer our condolences to Master Sergeant Wheeler's loved ones for their loss.

While our mission in Iraq is to train, advise, and assist our Iraqi partners in situations such as that operation, where we have actionable intelligence and a capable partner force, we want to support our partners, and we will. At the same time, the raid on Abu Sayyaf's home, the strikes against Junaid Hussain, and, most recently, Sanafi al-Nasr, should all serve notice to ISIL and other terrorist leaders that, once we locate them, no target is beyond our reach.

As we've looked at how to gather momentum and adapt to the changing battlefield, some have discussed putting a buffer zone, humanitarian zone, or no-fly zone in Syria. We have analyzed various options, and the political and military requirements of each. These options are complex and raise some challenges, which I'm prepared to discuss in answer to your questions.

Let me now turn to Russia's involvement in Syria. To be clear, we are not cooperating with Russia, and we're not letting Russia impact the pace or scope of our campaign against ISIL in Iraq and Syria. While we negotiated a document on safety of flight with the Russian Minister of Defense, we do not align ourselves more broadly with their military actions, because, instead of singularly attacking ISIL, as they said they were going to do, they're primarily attacking the Syrian opposition, as the Chairman has noted, which further fuels the tragic civil war there. Their actions suggest a doubling down on their longstanding relationship with Assad, sending advisors, artillery, and aviation to enable and support the Assad regime and Iranian forces in attacking moderates who oppose the regime and are essential to Syria's political transition. It appears the vast majority of their strikes, by some estimates as high as 85 to 90 percent, use "dumb bombs," which obviously increases the possibility of civilian casualties.

So, as Russia acts in a coalition of two with Iran at its side, the United States will continue to strengthen our 65-nation global coalition. Even as we've reached an understanding with the Russians on safety protocols for coalition pilots over Syria, we will keep prosecuting our counter-ISIL campaign unabated. We will keep supporting the moderate Syrian opposition, along with our other commitments to friends and allies in the region. Consistent with our strong, balanced approach towards Russian aggression elsewhere in the world, including NATO and Ukraine, we will keep the door open for Russia to contribute to efforts towards a political solution in which—which, in the final answer—analysis, is the only answer to the Syrian conflict.

I've discussed the military strategy and accompanying campaign, but, before I conclude, I remind the committee that defeating ISIL and protecting America requires coordinated efforts across all of the so-called "nine lines of effort," to include supporting effective governance in Iraq, enhancing intelligence collection, disrupting

ISIL's financing, countering ISIL's messaging, stopping the flow of foreign fighters, providing humanitarian support, and protecting our homeland, where other departments and agencies of our government have the lead.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. General Dunford.

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOSEPH F. DUNFORD, JR., USMC,
CHAIRMAN OF OTHER JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF**

General DUNFORD. Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee, thanks for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss our challenges in the Middle East, and specifically the military dimension of our campaign against ISIL.

I've been in my current position for just short of 4 weeks, and spent much of that time reviewing our counter-ISIL campaign. I also followed up on a commitment I made in my confirmation hearing to visit the region early in my tenure. Last weekend, to get a personal perspective on the campaign, I visited Israel, Jordan, and Iraq. I was extremely impressed with the focus and commitment of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines that I met during the visit. Thanks to your support, I can report that they are well trained and equipped.

Before taking your questions, I'd like to share a few thoughts on the counter-ISIL military campaign in Iraq and Syria. ISIL's primary source of strength is its claim to be a caliphate. To be successful, the coalition's military campaign must reduce ISIL's territorial control, destroy its warfighting capability, and undermine its brand and aura of invincibility. There are two critical elements of the military campaign:

The first is to conduct strikes against ISIL targets. The strikes are intended to kill key leadership and fighters, interdict their lines of communication, and deny them sources of revenue.

The second critical element in the military campaign is to develop and support effective partners on the ground to seize and secure ISIL-held terrain.

Many weeks before I became the Chairman, the leadership across the Department recognized that we needed to increase pressure on ISIL from multiple directions to generate momentum in the coalition's military campaign. As with any campaign, we're continuing to examine ways to enhance the effectiveness of our operations.

But, we all recognize that ISIL is a transregional threat requiring a broader strategy. The immediate priority is to bear down on core ISIL across Iraq and Syria simultaneously. The framework for the campaign is the same for Iraq and Syria, but the conditions on the ground present unique challenges and opportunities. The end state is to defeat ISIL. Without a partner on the ground, Syria has clearly presented the most difficult challenge. No one is satisfied with our progress to date. Moving forward, we must continue to work with our Turkish partners to secure the northern border of Syria. We must do all we can to enable vetted Syrian opposition forces willing to fight ISIL. We must be more aggressive in strikes that will deny ISIL the access they have to oil revenue.

The Secretary has already addressed the adjustments to the Syrian train-and-equip program. I support the refined approach. While there will be challenges, we'll be supporting groups who have already demonstrated the will to fight ISIL. Our support will be contingent upon their attacking specific objectives in meeting specific standards. We'll look for opportunities to support vetted opposition groups in both the north and along the border with Jordan.

In our initial efforts to build ground forces in Syria, Major General Mike Nagata and his team were operating under extraordinarily difficult conditions, and I'd like to thank them for their hard work. Due to their efforts, we have a much better understanding of the operating environment and the opportunities. We'll be able to leverage their initiative and lessons learned as we make course and speed corrections.

Last week, we began to move the campaign forward in another important way by striking a major oil facility and source of revenue for ISIL. Based on some superb analytic work and planning, Central Command (CENTCOM) is now postured to accelerate broader interagency efforts against ISIL's economic means. The Central Command is also continuing to work with Turkey to secure border—the border area in northwest Syria. We still have some work to do.

In Iraq, we've also been frustrated with the pace of operations. That said, there's been recent progress in Baiji, some movement around Ramadi, and the Peshmerga have made progress in the north. After talking to the commanders on the ground, I believe we'll have an opportunity to reinforce Iraqi success in the days ahead. We've developed a variety of options to do that.

To be successful in Syria and Iraq, in addition to the initiatives I've mentioned and those outlined by the Secretary, we also need to continue to improve how we leverage our intelligence capabilities and do more to cut the flow of foreign fighters. I have a better understanding of these two issues after my visit, and those will be a priority for me in the days ahead.

We will also continue to look hard at other ways to increase the effectiveness of coalition operations in the tempo of the campaign. The Secretary and the President have made it clear that they expect me to bring to them all of the options that may be—that may contribute to our winning the fight against ISIL. I've made a commitment to them that I would do that, and I'll meet that commitment.

In closing, as I complete my initial assessment of the campaign, I believe we've identified and started to implement a number of initiatives to move the campaign forward. We're not satisfied or complacent about where we are, and we won't be satisfied until ISIL is defeated.

Thank you again for the opportunity to join you, and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you very much, General.

Secretary Carter, the President's spokesman, after it was clear that the arm and train and equip by the DOD program had failed—President's spokesman said that the President was—felt vindicated that this program had failed, because he never supported it to start with. This was a program that we invested \$43

million, at least, of a \$500 million program. I'm not sure how many young people were killed in trying to implement this failed program. Did you feel vindicated when this program failed?

Secretary CARTER. Mr. Chairman, I thought that the effort—and I want to repeat something that the Chairman just said—I think that General Nagata, who was given this program, which was conceived last summer—

Chairman MCCAIN. Yeah, I just asked—

Secretary CARTER.—approved through the winter—

Chairman MCCAIN.—the question whether you felt vindicated, or not—

Secretary CARTER. No, I was—

Chairman MCCAIN.—as the—

Secretary CARTER.—disappointed.

Chairman MCCAIN.—President's spokesman—

Secretary CARTER. I was actually—no, I was disappointed in it.

Chairman MCCAIN. I see.

Secretary CARTER. I wished it had turned out differently.

Chairman MCCAIN. I see.

Secretary CARTER. However, we—

Chairman MCCAIN. But, the—

Secretary CARTER.—are learning our lessons from that, and, therefore, our new approach differs in—

Chairman MCCAIN. Well, then would one of those—

Secretary CARTER.—a fundamental way from—

Chairman MCCAIN. Go ahead.

Secretary CARTER. I can describe the difference between the old and the new. But, we think that we have learning lessons from that.

Chairman MCCAIN. So, you don't feel vindicated that the program failed.

Secretary CARTER. I was disappointed that it failed.

Chairman MCCAIN. I see. But, the President obviously wasn't. He felt vindicated, according to his spokesperson.

In this change that you were talking about—and already we're seeing some of the changes—does that mean that we—these young people that we train and equip and send in to fight—that we're going to protect them from being barrel-bombed and attacked by Russian aircraft?

Secretary CARTER. I think we have conveyed the same obligation last time I was before you—

Chairman MCCAIN. Right now, as we speak—

Secretary CARTER.—to protect—

Chairman MCCAIN.—Russian aircraft—

Secretary CARTER.—these forces—

Chairman MCCAIN.—are bombing—right now, as we speak, Russian aircraft are bombing moderate Syrian forces in Syria while we have deconflicted. Do you believe that we should be protecting those young people—

Secretary CARTER. Our Title 10 forces, we have an obligation to protect. We've stated that. We will have—

Chairman MCCAIN. Are we protecting them?

Secretary CARTER.—options to do that. We have authority to do that.

Chairman MCCAIN. Are we protecting them now?

Secretary CARTER. They have not come—they're operating in a—they have not come under attack by either Assad's forces or Russia's forces—

Chairman MCCAIN. Russia's air has not been—

Secretary CARTER.—the Syrian Arab—

Chairman MCCAIN.—attacking—

Secretary CARTER.—coalition and the Kurdish People's Protection Unit (YPG).

Chairman MCCAIN. No, no, I'm asking about the moderate Syrian forces that are there, some of whom we trained.

Secretary CARTER. I'm sorry, I was speaking of our train-and-equip—

Chairman MCCAIN. I'm asking the question about those that we—some of those we trained and equipped, moderate Syrian forces that are now being bombed by Russia.

Secretary CARTER. With respect to the Title 10 forces that the Department of Defense trains and equips in Syria, they have not come under attack, but we have expressed—

Chairman MCCAIN. None of the moderate forces that—some of whom we have trained, are—have come under attack by Russia from the air?

Secretary CARTER. Not in our train-and-equip program, our Title 10 program, no.

Chairman MCCAIN. That's fascinating. It—

Secretary CARTER. But, let me be clear, Chairman, the Russians—and, obviously, Assad—do attack moderate Syrian forces—

Chairman MCCAIN. Yes.

Secretary CARTER.—which are supported by—

Chairman MCCAIN. Primarily—

Secretary CARTER.—the international coalition. The—one of the reasons why the Russian approach is so—

Chairman MCCAIN. So, are we going to train—

Secretary CARTER.—wrongheaded—

Chairman MCCAIN.—are we going to train these young people, you say, in the change—are we going to send them into Syria to fight—are we going to protect them from being barrel-bombed by—

Secretary CARTER. The ones—

Chairman MCCAIN.—Bashar Assad and protected from—

Secretary CARTER. The ones that—

Chairman MCCAIN.—Russians—

Secretary CARTER. Yes, the ones that we—

Chairman MCCAIN. Anyone we send in and—

Secretary CARTER.—train and equip—

Chairman MCCAIN.—train, we're—

Secretary CARTER.—we have that—

Chairman MCCAIN.—going to—

Secretary CARTER.—obligation.

Chairman MCCAIN.—protect from Russian air attacks.

Secretary CARTER. We have an obligation to do that, and we've made that clear, right from the beginning of the train-and-equip program.

Chairman MCCAIN. We haven't done it. We haven't done it——

Secretary CARTER. They have not——

Chairman MCCAIN.—Secretary——

Secretary CARTER.—come under attack.

Chairman MCCAIN.—Carter.

Secretary CARTER. But, I've——

Chairman MCCAIN. I promise you they have. We will——

Secretary CARTER.—we have an obligation——

Chairman MCCAIN. We—you will have to correct the record.

Now, General Petraeus and General—and former Secretary Robert Gates, SECDEF, and now, we understand, Secretary Hillary Clinton, have all stated that they think we should stop the barrel-bombing and that we should train and equip, and we should have no-fly zone or aircraft exclusionary zones. I might point out, General Dunford, as complicated as it is, we were able to do Northern Watch and Southern Watch rather successfully in Iraq, although it's not exactly the same. So, are you recommending that we should stop the barrel-bombing, as General David Petraeus and Secretary—former Secretary Gates and now Secretary Clinton—have suggested, to stop the barrel-bombing, to provide a no—an aircraft exclusionary zone in order to protect the innocent civilians that are being driven into refugee status, in the greatest refugee situation since the end of World War II?

Secretary CARTER. Yeah, Chairman, I—we have, as I indicated in my statement, analyzed zones of various kinds and—humanitarian zones, buffer zones, and you're talking about——

Chairman MCCAIN. Yeah

Secretary CARTER.—no-fly zones. I can give you some of the considerations——

Chairman MCCAIN. Stop the barrel-bombing.

Secretary CARTER.—the—that would be one of the——

Chairman MCCAIN. Yeah.

Secretary CARTER.—intents of a no-fly zone. If you'd like, I can tell you some of the considerations that——

Chairman MCCAIN. I'd just like to know whether you support, or not.

Secretary CARTER. We have not made that recommendation to the President. He has not taken it off the table. I can explain some of the reasons for our recommendation—or our——

Chairman MCCAIN. It's not an issue that has not been examined, Secretary Carter. It's been recommended for years by some of us. I mean, you have to examine it——

Secretary CARTER. But, we have looked at it quite——

Chairman MCCAIN.—all over again?

Secretary CARTER. We've looked at it quite closely. I'm prepared to describe it. I know the Chairman is, as well.

Chairman MCCAIN. It's not a—it's a matter—it's an issue that's been on the table for three or four years that I know of. It's not a—we received information when General Martin Dempsey said it would cost a billion dollars a day or something incredible. But, it's not a new issue.

Secretary CARTER. It is not a new issue. It is a substantial military——

Chairman MCCAIN. So, it seems to me you should have a position on it.

Secretary CARTER. We have not recommended that. We have analyzed it. We've presented the alternatives——

Chairman MCCAIN. So, you do not——

Secretary CARTER.—to the President.

chairman—support——

Secretary CARTER. We've not——

Chairman MCCAIN. You do not agree with General Petraeus and former Secretary Gates and Secretary Clinton.

Secretary CARTER. We do not have a concept of operations for a no-fly zone at this time that we're prepared——

Chairman MCCAIN. After all these years, we don't have a concept of operations.

Secretary CARTER. That we're prepared to recommend.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Reed.

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I just, Mr. Secretary, want to clarify. You have spoken exclusively about forces trained by the Department of Defense. You kept—Title 10, but there are a lot of titles in the U.S. Code. But, there are other forces on the ground that our coalition partners have trained, that have come under attack by the Russians. Is that—that's clear, correct?

Secretary CARTER. Absolutely true.

Senator REED. But, the forces that are subject to direct training by the Department of Defense have been placed in areas which, for many reasons, have not been subject to aerial attack——

Secretary CARTER. Well, they're fighting ISIL.

Senator REED. They're fighting ISIL.

Secretary CARTER. So—and the Russians, as I stated, are not, even though they said they were.

Senator REED. Now, let me go back to the points you made about the train-and-equip program. It has shifted from trying to train individual units, insert those units into the counter-ISIL fight, to identifying leaders and providing some training to the leader, and then——

Secretary CARTER. Right.

Senator REED.—some support. There is another aspect of this approach which I'd like to clarify. That is training not just leaders, but individual enablers, people with technical skills that can go into a deployed unit and provide those skills. Is that still being done?

Secretary CARTER. Yes, that is still part of the approach. That was part of the old approach, as well. But, the big difference is that, rather than trying to form brand-new units, we are identifying units that are already fighting ISIL, providing them equipment, and, as you point out, after vetting their leadership, providing them with selected abilities that help them leverage our enablement, particular with—from the air.

Senator REED. From the air. So, the program still is able to do that and, in addition, grow not so much units, but teams of Syrian nationals that can go in as specialists on a whole range of issues: air support, medical support, logistics support—and aid these units in Syria.

Secretary CARTER. Exactly. Now, we're very transactional in this, so we are giving some equipment, seeing how they perform, give some more equipment, and how—see how they perform. But, these are groups that already exist. The Syrian Arab Coalition, moving in the areas north of Raqqa, is an example of that.

Senator REED. Thank you.

General Dunford, you just returned from Iraq, and you had conversations with the—Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi because there were disconcerting reports of invitations to the Russians, collaboration at the intelligence level with the Russians. What's your latest estimate of that? Is it something that was a more political statement by the Prime Minister, or is there actual ongoing, real efforts?

General DUNFORD. Senator, thanks—I asked that specific question to all the senior ranking leaders that I met with, and I explained to them how difficult it would be for us to continue to provide support if the Russians were invited in to conduct airstrikes. I was assured, at every level, that that wouldn't be the case.

Could I follow up on the train-and-equip?

Senator REED. Yes, sir.

General DUNFORD. In your opening statement, you mentioned that we completely suspended the program, and I just wanted to clarify one point. The individuals that we had previously trained, we are still supporting them when they're still in the fight. There are a number of them that are doing exactly the kind of things you spoke about, Senator Reed. They're providing joint terminal attack controller (JTAC)-like support for forces that are fighting ISIL.

Senator REED. It's—based on the Secretary's comments, it's our intention to expand that as rapidly as we can.

General DUNFORD. Where there are opportunities. I would just say, you know, for the T&E program, although we're talking now about the Syrian Arab Coalition and training those large groups, my perception and the guidance that we have from the President is, where there are other opportunities, we should bring those forward to him. When I talked to the team on the ground, I made that clear to them, that, when we see opportunities, we ought to develop concept of operations, bring that back, and expand the program, where it will work. We'll look to do that both in the northern part in Syria as well as along the Jordanian border.

Senator REED. One final question, General Dunford, is that—and you—both your testimonies highlighted this inability of the government in Baghdad to fully support Sunni forces in Anbar, particularly. Some of that is historic mistrust, et cetera. Do you—from your testimony, they're—you're considering having American advisors at—not at the company level, but higher up, and the one function they could perform is to be an honest broker, which would allow the payment of troops, would allow the government of Baghdad to feel that they have some control, and, in addition, demand, on behalf of Sunni forces, that they get the fair share. Is that part of your thinking, going forward?

General DUNFORD. It is, Senator. I think there's actually four reasons why you might consider putting forces in an accompany role. The first is what you're suggesting, which is to really to bring some campaign coherence. I think the other is to ensure that our

logistics support is effective. Another challenge we've had is situational awareness and intelligence. So, that would be another—that would be another advantage of doing that. Then, also the better delivery of combined arms. So, there's really four factors, I think, that would be considered. If it had operational or strategic impact and we could reinforce success, that would be the basic framework within which I'd make a recommendation for additional forces to be colocated with Iraqi units.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Just to make the record clear, Secretary Carter, there are coalition-supported and American-supported forces that are in Syria that are being attacked by Russian aircraft. Is that true or false?

Secretary CARTER. I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. There are moderate Syrian opposition forces—

Chairman MCCAIN. Coalition-supported.

Secretary CARTER.—in Syria supported by the coalition, and, of course, people that we think are part of Syria's future and part of the Syrian political transition.

Chairman MCCAIN. It's hard to be part of—

Secretary CARTER. They are being attacked. That's—and not ISIL—and that's why the Russian approach is backwards, or—

Chairman MCCAIN. That's why—

Secretary CARTER.—I've called it wrongheaded.

Chairman MCCAIN. That's why it's immoral to train people in and watch them—to go in and fight, and watch them being destroyed and maimed and killed—

Secretary CARTER. For our part—

Chairman MCCAIN.—by Russia.

Secretary CARTER. For our part, in our train-and-equip program, as I've said before this committee before, we have a moral obligation—

Chairman MCCAIN. You are making a distinction without a difference, Mr. Secretary. These are American-supported and coalition-supported men who are going in and being slaughtered.

Secretary Inhofe—Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Yes. My understanding, Mr. Chairman, that Senator Cotton is presiding, so I'll defer to him and then ask that we return to regular order.

Senator COTTON. Thank you, Senator Inhofe. Yes, I do have to go preside over the Senate. General Dunford, that's the Senate equivalent of staff duty for a junior officer.

Secretary Carter, you talked about our “nine lines of effort.” Not all of those are military lines of effort. Is that correct?

Secretary CARTER. That's correct.

Senator COTTON. Now that General Allen has departed as our envoy in charge of those “nine lines of effort,” who are minding those nondefense lines of effort?

Secretary CARTER. Well, it's a good question. What—one of the things that I have proposed, and Secretary Kerry has accepted, that he and I meet periodically with the other agency heads who have the other nine—the other lines of effort. General Allen's been present at those meetings. His successor, Ambassador McGuirk, will be present at them. I thought—it's one of the things I noticed

when I began to look at this campaign—that since all of these lines of effort are—it is necessary to have moving in concert, we needed a better effort to do that. So, Secretary Kerry’s agreed to do that with me. We’ve had, I think, four meetings—General Dunford was at the last one—focused on—counterfinancing was the last one. Before that was foreign fighter flow both into the conflict region and out of the conflict region to Europe, around the world. We are addressing messaging and ISIL’s messages and efforts to recruit people online.

So, there are lots of different dimensions to this that are not military, per se, but I believe that they’re opportunities to make the whole greater than the sum of the parts, and I’ve sought to seize those opportunities with Secretary Kerry, now with General Dunford, and make sure that all these different efforts are coordinated. They’re all important. The other participants are doing important things—the diplomatic people and the intelligence people and the homeland security and law enforcement folks. But, I think the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts. Just per your question, that’s exactly the intent.

Senator COTTON. Is that a detailed way of saying there’s not a single person taking over all of the nondefense lines of effort?

Secretary CARTER. There has not been a single person who had that responsibility. Remember, General Allen, who was superb—General Allen had the responsibility for assembling the coalition, which he did with great skill, and, to his credit and Ambassador McGuirk’s, we have a broad coalition. I’m talking about something different, which is assembling the mechanics of all of the nine lines of effort. So, that’s something I’m undertaking to do with Secretary Kerry, and we’re gathering in the other parties that are involved. Ambassador McGuirk will be part of that effort. But, I think it’s necessary—

Senator COTTON. I’d like to—

Secretary CARTER.—necessary organizational change.

Senator COTTON. I’d like to shift briefly now to Russia’s move into Syria. A few weeks ago, before the major Russian movement into Syria, the United States Government requested that Bulgaria and Iraq close its airspace to Russian aircraft. How did we transmit that request to Iraq?

Secretary CARTER. I do not know what the mechanics of that were. Can I get back to you on that, Senator? I simply don’t know.

Senator COTTON. Is that something the State Department would—

Secretary CARTER. I’m happy to—

Senator COTTON.—typically do? The Department of Defense?

Secretary CARTER. I—

Senator COTTON. The White House?

Secretary CARTER. I—Joe, go ahead.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I believe that message would have been delivered by Ambassador Jones, in Baghdad.

Senator COTTON. Iraq obviously declined our request, while Bulgaria accepted it.

General DUNFORD. Declined the request—

Senator COTTON. Let Russian aircraft fly through their airspace.

General DUNFORD. There was—there has been Russian aircraft that's flown through Iraqi airspace. My understanding is, it was not at the invitation of the Iraqi government.

Senator COTTON. Does it—does the Iraq air force have the capability to protect its own air force and exclude a foreign air force like Russia's?

General DUNFORD. They have limited capability, Senator. They recently were fielded with F-16s, but they have limited air-to-air capability.

Senator COTTON. So, if the United States Government requested that the Government of Iraq close its airspace to Russia, surely the United States Government was prepared to assist Iraq in closing its airspace and stopping Russian aircraft from flying over Iraq?

Secretary CARTER. Well, I—it's a sovereign decision by Iraq, but, I'll tell you, we're not uninterested in it. And—but, you're raising a very important question, which is, Is Iraq going to cooperate with the Russian—what I would regard as mis—I called it wrongheaded approach I Syria? We have received—and I believe that General Dunford received, just last week—from Prime Minister Abadi, in no uncertain terms, the statement that he will not work with the Russians, he will—he will not allow them to be partners with Iraq in that regard, that we are the preferred partners of Iraq. We've been insistent on that point. Prime Minister Abadi has repeated those pledges to us. I only say that because I—we feel emphatically about that—receiving those pledges, and intend to have them implemented by Prime Minister Abadi. But, he has not been ambiguous about that. I believe the most recent conversation was held by General Dunford, and perhaps you'd like to say something about that, Joe. It's a serious issue.

General DUNFORD. No, Senator, I raised it both with the Minister of Defense and the Prime Minister and, again, tried to explain to them that our continued support really would be problematic, were they to invite the Russians in to conduct strikes. I was assured that they had not extended that invitation, and they did not intend to extend an invitation to do that.

Senator COTTON. Well, in closing, I would say it's problematic for Russia to be resupplying its forces in Syria by flying through Iraq. We should renew our request that they exclude Russian aircraft from their airspace, and our military should be prepared to assist them in excluding Russian aircraft from their airspace.

Thank you, Senator Inhofe, Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Manchin.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for your service and for being here.

Let me—I think my question would be, What is our end game? The end game would be—we've been there, bogged down for quite some time. If you look at—when I go home to West Virginia and talk to the citizens, you know, they say, "Well, to stop this migration, you're going to have to have a no-fly zone. You have to have protection where people feel like they're safe. As the country re-groups or rebuilds, that—there are still people there that, basically, are peace-loving, well-educated." So, we haven't made a decision on that. I know the Chairman has asked directly on that.

And then I start looking at, basically, with Russia's involvement, and Russia being involved to protect Assad. Russia is more involved in protecting Assad and working with Iran to have some influence of what happens there, in my evaluation. Then, you look at the United States. We're more concerned about fighting ISIL, if you will—or it looks to be—more so than protecting or fighting with our coalition, who wants to defeat Assad.

So, what would be the end game? Who—what part are we going to be able to play in this unless we take on Russia or basically check Russia from what they're doing, unless we have some type of diplomatic relations with Russia and an agreement with Russia? I see Russia as being in a situation—and they have involved themselves—to where they're going to be a major broker in that region, because Iran seems to be, if you will, more influential, as far as in Iraq and in Syria, with Assad. Now with Assad being helped and propped up by Russia, we're out there fighting ISIL. We don't—we're not protecting the people that can basically put any security back into Syria. I just—it's a very confusing situation. It's hard for us to say, "Okay, at the end of the day, here's our end game."

And if somebody has any explanation for that and tells me what we're trying to accomplish, I'd be happy to hear it.

Secretary CARTER. I'll take that, Senator.

The—for us, the paramount objective is the defeat of ISIL. That will require——

Senator MANCHIN. That's our number-one——

Secretary CARTER.—in Iraq——

Senator MANCHIN.—priority right now in Syria.

Secretary CARTER.—because they're trying to attack Americans.

Senator MANCHIN. I gotcha.

Secretary CARTER. We have to take that very seriously.

Senator MANCHIN. Okay.

Secretary CARTER. They must be defeated, and they must be——

Senator MANCHIN. You agree——

Secretary CARTER.—defeated very——

Senator MANCHIN. I'm sorry, Mr. Secretary.

Secretary CARTER. Sorry.

Senator MANCHIN. You do agree that Russia's primary is to protect Assad.

Secretary CARTER. Yeah. They said they were going to fight ISIL, and that's not what they're doing.

Senator MANCHIN. Okay. So——

Secretary CARTER. They're propping up——

Senator MANCHIN.—we——

Secretary CARTER.—Assad, which just fuels the civil war, which is the point the Chairman was making——

Senator MANCHIN. Okay.

Secretary CARTER.—and fuels the——

Senator MANCHIN. So, we have two different——

Secretary CARTER. So, they're on the——

Senator MANCHIN.—objectives right now——

Secretary CARTER.—they're on the wrong side of the——

Senator MANCHIN. The United States and Russia has two complete different objectives.

Secretary CARTER. Well, they say they have the same objectives, but——

Senator MANCHIN. But, we don't——

Secretary CARTER.—their actions——

Senator MANCHIN.—see that. I gotcha.

Secretary CARTER.—believe that.

Senator MANCHIN. And they're basically in line with Iran in helping prop up Assad and protect Assad.

Secretary CARTER. Iran has also supported Assad, absolutely, as well.

So, to get to the question of the end game, the end game in Syria has to be a transition in which Assad is no longer running the country. We would like to see that transition occur in as peaceful and prompt a way as possible, because we would like there to be the—a——

Senator MANCHIN. Is it obvious that—basically, that Russia and Iran will have more influence on who the next leader or the leadership of Syria's going to be than we will?

Secretary CARTER. Well, I think that—I wouldn't—I don't think they can be sure of that, because the——

Senator MANCHIN. But, I'm saying they're——

Secretary CARTER.—the future of——

Senator MANCHIN.—positioning themselves for that.

Secretary CARTER.—Syria—the future of Syria will be in the hands of the Syrian people, and many of those are Syrian moderate opposition leaders who are being attacked by Assad's forces, with Russia's help, right now.

Senator MANCHIN. Have we——

Secretary CARTER. That's why Russia's——

Senator MANCHIN.—been able to assist——

Secretary CARTER.—on the wrong side of——

Senator MANCHIN.—the migration of the people from Syria as being——

Secretary CARTER. Some of them.

Senator MANCHIN.—more of the leaders——

Secretary CARTER. Some of them.

Senator MANCHIN.—more of the well-educated, more of the peace-loving?

Secretary CARTER. Yes. There's a spectrum there that goes all the way over to true extremists, like Jabhat al-Nusra (al-Nusra) and al— and ISIL, all the way through groups——

Senator MANCHIN. Can I ask, General——

Secretary CARTER.—much more moderate.

Senator MANCHIN.—Dunford, if—on this—General, I know that we've talked before on some of this, but it's just so—it's so hard to go home and explain our involvement unless we're going to have a no-fly and protect those who want to be there to rebuild their country. We're not going to have much to work with.

General DUNFORD. The Chairman said something important in his opening comments. I think that's exactly what the military campaign is designed to do, and that's to provide some leverage. I think what we owe—what we owe the President is options that will allow us to generate the kind of momentum and confidence in the

military campaign against ISIL that will give us leverage politically.

So, the decision's been made that the issue with Assad is being solved politically right now. So, I think there's two separate approaches, here, in Syria that'll come together at some point in the future. One is that we're dealing with ISIL on the ground, and we're doing that militarily, and that's with the strikes and the partnership capacity that I spoke about a minute ago. Meanwhile, there are broader political negotiations that are taking place to determine the future of the transitional government. I think right now it's pretty clear to me what we should be doing on the military side, and that is taking the fight to ISIL, generating momentum, keeping the coalition together, giving confidence in the campaign. Then, again—

Senator MANCHIN. If I can just—

General DUNFORD.—the Chairman talked about—

Senator MANCHIN. Mr. Chairman, if you indulge us, one more.

If I can just ask: Is the rebels or the coalition forces, which we are supporting in Syria—are they more intent on fighting Assad or fighting ISIL?

General DUNFORD. The individuals that we are supporting, specifically those in the north, are supporting—fighting ISIL.

Senator MANCHIN. More so than Assad.

General DUNFORD. More so than Assad.

Senator MANCHIN. Even though—

General DUNFORD. So, that includes the Syrian Arab Coalition and the YPG and some smaller groups that we've supported. We have some other groups that we're beginning to negotiate with in the south that have expressed the same intent.

Senator MANCHIN. Thank you, sir.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Inhofe.

Senator INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Our committee rules have always been to submit the statements 24 hours in advance, and I—that didn't—it's really helpful to us if we can get that. So, I'd ask you, in the future hearings, to do that.

Appreciate the fact that both the Chairman and you, Secretary Carter, mentioned by name Josh Wheeler. Josh Wheeler is from Roland, Oklahoma. He's one who is certainly a—he was a hero before all of this happened, and, by his actions, he saved 70 lives of hostages and fellow members of the Coalition Task Force. I—so, I appreciate very much your talking about him.

I—since the—you were here before, Secretary Carter, in July, ISIL still controls much of the northern and western Iraq, despite more than a year of United States airstrikes and the loss of Ramadi. Significant setback. Russia continued its military buildup in Syria, as we've been talking about, and began operations to support Iraq. Iran Quds Forces in Syria have been joined by Iranian support forces from Lebanon's Hezbollah to support the Assad regime. All under the command of General Qasem Soleimani, who previously directed attacks on United States forces in Iraq. We talked about the change in the train-and-equip program, which I would like to get—have you elaborate a little bit more on. But, in your statement that we got this morning, Secretary Carter, you said, quote, "To be clear, we are not cooperating with Russia, and

we are not letting Russia impact the pace and scope of our campaign against ISIL in Iraq and Syria.”

Last week, we had—well, some time ago, we had Dr. Henry Kissinger in as a witness, but then last week we had five professors that were there in one of our really good hearings that we had on—I think it was on Wednesday or Thursday. We quoted Dr. Kissinger when he said, quote, “Syria is the latest symptom of a disintegration of the American role in stabilizing the Middle East order,” unquote.

Now, do you think that’s inconsistent with the statements that you’ve made, Secretary Carter?

Secretary CARTER. I think that the Middle East is certainly very tumultuous, but, once again, I come back to: our role is to protect American interests in that circumstance. That’s—

Senator INHOFE. Yeah, but are—

Secretary CARTER.—what we’re doing. Whether it be the fight against ISIL, our alliances and partnerships with Gulf countries, and Israel, our posture in the Gulf, all of that is intended to protect American interests in the Middle East. Is the Middle East tumultuous? You bet it is. But, our anchor is the protection—

Senator INHOFE. Well, when I read your statement, it seemed to me that it’s not totally consistent with that.

What do you think, General Dunford, about Kissinger’s statement, in terms of our role in that part of the world?

General DUNFORD. Senator, thanks.

I mean, I—what I would agree with, with former Secretary Kissinger, is that we have a critical role to play in the Middle East. We have national interests in the Middle East, and we should be decisively engaged in advancing those national interests.

Senator INHOFE. Yeah, okay, but—and I know this is about the Middle East, but—and Ukraine is another good example of what our posture is in that part of the world. A lot of us here were actually—well, I was there during the last election that they had, in October, when, for the first time in 96 years, they don’t have one Communist on—in their Parliament in the Ukraine. And so, President Petro Poroshenko and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and—they’re all—that was a pro-Western effort. And then, immediately, Putin started killing them all. Our response was sending blankets and K-rations—well, they don’t call them K-rations anymore, but—anyway, do you agree, General Dunford, that this is the right response that we should have had, to maintain what you have always perceived to be our role?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I don’t want to be evasive, but I’m not sure it would be appropriate for me to comment on an issue of policy and what we ought to do. I mean, it—I think my job is to provide military options to our leadership—

Senator INHOFE. Okay.

General DUNFORD.—in support of the policy.

Senator INHOFE. Okay. We’ve been—let me ask you a question, because I don’t know. What is the current status of Fallujah?

General DUNFORD. Fallujah, right now, is being held by insurgents. That is one of the areas that’s been identified for future operations by Iraqi Security Forces.

Senator INHOFE. Well, yeah, that’s—you know what—

Chairman MCCAIN. That's comforting. We know it's been identified.

Senator INHOFE. All right. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Heinrich.

Can't make it up.

Senator HEINRICH. Secretary Carter—Secretary Carter, if there is one lesson it seems to me we should have learned in the Middle East and North Africa by now, it's that every time we think it can't get worse, if there's not an end game, it can. Removing Saddam Hussein at the cost of thousands of American lives gave us a chaotic civil war, an ethnic war that led to the vacuum that helped spawn ISIL. In Libya, we removed a brutal dictator, only to see chaos and extremism reign across what can now only loosely be called a country.

So, to reference Senator Manchin's comments that we need to think about an end game, here, I think about the fact that many of our colleagues now believe that the solution to Syria today is to focus directly on the removal of the Assad regime rather than the current administration focus on ISIL.

So, I want to ask you: Were the Assad regime to fall without a plan in place for follow-on governance and a political settlement that could create some sort of stability, how confident are you that Syria wouldn't just slip into an even more chaotic state, you know, potentially threatening our allies in the region, creating new opportunities for ISIL, and creating a new wave of refugees that could make the current outpouring of refugees look modest?

Secretary CARTER. Well, that—the end game we seek is both the defeat of ISIL and a transition in Syria. You're right, the sooner that occurs, the more likely it is that their—the structures of Syrian society aren't completely destroyed by the time that transition occurs. That's why hastening that political transition—Assad out and the political forces, to include the moderate Syrian forces now opposing Assad, have the opportunity to rebuild the country. That's the only way to put Syria back together. And the sooner that occurs, the better. That's why we—we're supporting that political transition. But, at the same time, we have to defeat ISIL. They have to be militarily defeated. There's no—

Senator HEINRICH. My point with respect to Assad is that, should Assad fall, we need to be thinking about what comes next so it's not just an opportunity for ISIL and other extremist groups in that region.

Secretary CARTER. I believe that the talks that Secretary Kerry is having with various partners—parties in the region this week are precisely aimed at deciding what the contours of that political settlement would be and what would come after it. But, one of the reasons why it's so important that this occur quickly is that the structures of the Syrian state are going to be important to the future, and we don't want them to disintegrate entirely. That's why fueling the Syrian civil war, which is what the Russians are doing, is so wrongheaded.

Senator HEINRICH. General Dunford, with respect to the potential no-fly-zone issue that was brought up earlier, what would be the limitations of that kind of course of action, given particularly

the new fairly sophisticated air defenses from Russia that are now inside Syria?

General DUNFORD. Senator, from a military perspective, we can implement a no-fly zone, and we have the capability to do that. The challenges are political, legal, and then a diversion of the resources that are currently fighting ISIL in support of that no-fly zone. So, those are among the factors that were considered when we looked at the no-fly zone.

Senator HEINRICH. Moving back to you, Secretary Carter, during your previous appearance before this committee, in July, you emphasized that Prime Minister Abadi was doing everything he could to recruit Sunnis to the fight. And I think you said that, quote, "Only"—or—"Sunnis can take back Anbar." Do you still feel this way? Can you update the committee on the progress, or lack of progress, in training Iraqi Security Forces?

Secretary CARTER. It is still true. The recapture of western Iraq is going to require Sunni forces that participate in that recapture and then, of course, that keep the peace after the peace is won. That's why we're in—so intent on getting Sunni fighters into the fight. And the legacy of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was to make the armed forces of Iraq more sectarian, to the detriment of the Sunnis. That's one of the things that led to ISIL. I think that Prime Minister Abadi is trying, but I think they—that—I'm going to be honest with you—Iraq needs to—

Senator HEINRICH. A lot of that—

Secretary CARTER.—do more—

Senator HEINRICH.—damage has been done.

Secretary CARTER.—to attract—well, but if we're going to reverse it, we need to try to recruit, pay, arm, and equip the Sunni forces. That is our purpose. That's what we're doing with the Iraqis. That needs to be part of the future.

If I can also address the no-fly zone, I just—I just want to be clear. We have studied the no-fly zone as—the Chairman's absolutely right, one knows how to do that. I thought it—I'll give you some of the considerations that go into that. By the way, I should—the President hasn't taken anything like this off the table. You asked whether we've recommended that. At this stage, we've not. A no-fly zone would be intended to prevent the Syrian air force from, as the Chairman said, "barrel-bombing" or otherwise using airpower, both fixed-wing and rotary-wing, against the civilians population. Where they're doing that is over in the western part of the country, which is not the area where we're flying in now, because we're flying and attacking ISIL, further to the east. That area is protected by the Syrian Integrated Air Defense System. So, were we to fly there, we would need to deal with the Syrian Integrated Air Defense System, which is a substantial undertaking of its own that we have, as the Chairman indicated, analyzed, and we certainly have capabilities to do. Then, we would be interdicting both fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft that were attacking the Syrian population.

The—I should note that it—however, that most of the civilian casualties inflicted by Assad's forces on the civilian population have been from artillery. Obviously, this wouldn't do anything about artillery, but it would do something about airstrikes.

It's a substantial new undertaking. We've analyzed it. We've not made the recommendation to do it at this time. But, I respect people who are making recommendations for these kinds of zones. Then there are also humanitarian zones, which have been referenced also, which are a portion of Syria, now speaking conceptually, where people could congregate and be protected. Now, those—a zone thus created would be contested by ISIL, by al-Nusra, at a minimum, and so it would have to be defended. So, again, it's a substantial military undertaking. The people who live there would, therefore, take a ground force, with accompanying air forces, to accomplish that. The people who were protected could be people who live there or—and I think some people who have moved into Turkey, whom Turkey wishes to move back. But, I just want to be clear that, to keep it safe would require fighting to keep it safe, because the people who want to terrorize the population would attempt to attack such a zone. So, you need to think, in each case—and we've thought through several different cases—who's in, who is kept out, and how the enforcement of it is done.

So, there are air zones and there are ground zones. We have considered all of them. Again, the President hasn't taken anything off the table. We've not made any specific recommendations in that regard, but we've looked at a variety of such possibilities.

Let me ask the Chairman if he has anything to add to that.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, to my colleagues, for letting me jump ahead. I appreciate it very, very much.

I want to see if I've got this right. We're going to train people inside of Syria to fight ISIL, rather than training them outside of Syria; equip them inside and train them inside, right? New strategy.

Secretary CARTER. Yes. That's where they are.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. So, you know, count me in for trying to help. Do we still want to replace Assad?

Secretary CARTER. Oh, absolutely. I mean—

Senator GRAHAM. Is that a goal of ours?

Secretary CARTER. A—yes—a transition from Assad—

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Secretary CARTER.—to a government—

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

Secretary CARTER.—of Syria that is—

Senator GRAHAM. General Dunford—

Secretary CARTER.—inclusive and moderate—

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

Secretary CARTER.—and together.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

Secretary CARTER. Absolutely.

Senator GRAHAM. General Dunford, is it smart to let Russia fight ISIL and we stay out of the fight?

General DUNFORD. Russia is not fighting ISIL, Senator.

Senator GRAHAM. But, that wouldn't be a good idea, to rely on Russia to fight ISIL for us.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think we need to be engaged in advancing our own national interests. We have a national interest in dealing—

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.
 General DUNFORD.—with ISIL, and——
 Senator GRAHAM. Okay.
 General DUNFORD.—we should be doing that.
 Senator GRAHAM. Okay, here's——
 General DUNFORD. We can do it——
 Senator GRAHAM.—the question.
 General DUNFORD.—it more effectively. I'm not confident——
 Senator GRAHAM. Right.
 General DUNFORD.—that Russia——
 Senator GRAHAM. Right.
 General DUNFORD.—is effective——
 Senator GRAHAM. I am——
 General DUNFORD.—would be effective at doing it.
 Senator GRAHAM. I'm a million percent with you.
 Are we going to supply air support for the people we train to fight ISIL?
 General DUNFORD. We are, Senator.
 Senator GRAHAM. Do those same people want to take Assad down?
 General DUNFORD. The ones that we are supporting right now are focused on ISIL, sir.
 Senator GRAHAM. Do they have a goal to take Assad down?
 General DUNFORD. Senator, I don't know.
 Senator GRAHAM. What do you mean you don't know?
 General DUNFORD. Well, the ones we're—we—I don't know because——
 Senator GRAHAM. Don't you think most people in Syria want two things: they want to fight—they want to destroy ISIL and get rid of Assad, the person who's killed 250,000 of their family?
 General DUNFORD. The——
 Senator GRAHAM. Is that really a mystery?
 General DUNFORD. No, it's not——
 Senator GRAHAM. It's not——
 General DUNFORD.—Senator.
 Senator GRAHAM.—a mystery. Okay. Is Russia going to fight for Assad?
 General DUNFORD. Russia is fighting for Assad.
 Senator GRAHAM. Will Iran fight for Assad?
 General DUNFORD. They are doing that, sir.
 Senator GRAHAM. Will Hezbollah fight for Assad?
 General DUNFORD. They were doing that.
 Senator GRAHAM. When the people we train to fight ISIL turn on Assad, which they surely will, are we going to fight with them to replace Assad?
 General DUNFORD. I can't answer that question, Senator.
 Senator GRAHAM. Can you answer it, Secretary Carter?
 Secretary CARTER. Yeah, I—just to be clear, let's take the——
 Senator GRAHAM. That days is coming.
 Secretary CARTER.—YPG Kurds—well, I—the——
 Senator GRAHAM. Do you see a scenario where the——
 Secretary CARTER. Let me just——
 Senator GRAHAM.—people in Syria——
 Secretary CARTER. Let me just address the——

Senator GRAHAM.—don't take——

Secretary CARTER.—the people that——

Senator GRAHAM.—on Assad?

Secretary CARTER.—the people that are—that we are equipping are people who live in or come from ISIL-occupied territory, and they're——

Senator GRAHAM. Do they want to take Assad down?

Secretary CARTER.—on defeating ISIL and——

Senator GRAHAM. Do they want to take Assad down?

Secretary CARTER. For the most part, they're focused on defeating——

Senator GRAHAM. Do they want to take Assad—have you asked them?

Secretary CARTER. We know what their intent is, and it is to fight ISIL.

Senator GRAHAM. Come on.

Secretary CARTER. They're fighting ISIL now.

Senator GRAHAM. You know as well as I do, both of you know, that the average Syrian not only wants to destroy ISIL, but they're intent on destroying Assad because he's killed 250,000 of them.

Here's the question for this committee. How do we leverage Assad leaving, when Russia's going to fight for him, Iran's going to fight for him, Hezbollah's fighting for him, and we're not going to do a damn thing to help people take him down? Y'all both know that. So, when Kerry goes over to Geneva, he is turning over Syria to the Russians and to the Iranians.

Is there any credible military threat to Assad now that Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah's on his side? Do you see any credible military threat to take him down, General Dunford?

General DUNFORD. I think the balance of forces right now are in Assad's advantage.

Senator GRAHAM. Not his advantage. He is secure as the day is long.

So, this is what's happened, folks. The strategy is completely fallen apart. Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah are going to fight for their guy, and we're not going to do a damn thing to help the people who want to change Syria for the better by getting rid of the dictator in Damascus.

Do you see a scenario, Secretary Carter, where we would fight to support an effort to take Assad down, that we would fight alongside of people who want to take Assad down in Syria? Is that remotely possible?

Secretary CARTER. We are—our approach to removing Assad has been to——

Senator GRAHAM. Does it have a military component?

Secretary CARTER. It is principally a political effort in Syria. Our——

Senator GRAHAM. So, the answer——

Secretary CARTER.—military effort in Syria——

Senator GRAHAM.—is no.

Secretary CARTER.—our military effort in Syria——

Senator GRAHAM. Are we going to fight with people who want to take Assad down? Are we going to provide them military help?

Secretary CARTER. Our train-and-equip program——

Senator GRAHAM. The answer is no.

Secretary CARTER.—is to provide——

Senator GRAHAM. The answer is no——

Secretary CARTER.—is supportive of people——

Senator GRAHAM. The answer is no.

Secretary CARTER.—who are fighting ISIL.

Senator GRAHAM. So, let me just end this. If I'm Assad, this is a good day for me, because the American government has just said, without saying it, that they're not going to fight to replace me. The Russians and the Iranians and Hezbollah, this is a really good day for them, because their guy has no military credible threat.

So, now you tell me what kind of deal we're going to get, folks. I'm sure we'll get a really good deal with this construct. So, what you've done, gentlemen, along with the President, is, you've turned Syria over to Russia and Iran. You've told the people in Syria, who have died by the hundreds of thousands, we're more worried about a political settlement than we are about what follows.

All I can say, this is a sad day for America, and the region will pay hell for this, because the Arabs are not going to accept this. The people in Syria are not going to accept this. This is a half-assed strategy, at best.

Chairman MCCAIN. Since a quorum is now present, I ask the committee to consider a list of 1,663 pending military nominations. All of these nominations have been before the committee the required length of time. Is there a motion so—favorably report these 1,663 nominations——

Senator REED. So moved.

Chairman MCCAIN.—to the Senate?

Is there a second?

Senator KAINE. Second.

Chairman MCCAIN. All in favor, say aye.

[A chorus of ayes.]

Chairman MCCAIN. The motion carries.

Senator KAINE.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, to the witnesses, for your service and testimony.

Secretary Carter, you stated that the primary objective of our actions, as you've described this morning, is the defeat of ISIL. I want to dig into that a little bit.

Currently—I think I'm right on this—we are engaged in activities against ISIL, military activities in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, and then, when we were on a—during that week of congressional recess, the President sent to Congress a war powers letter indicating the detachment of, I think, 300 American troops to Cameroon to assist in activities against Boko Haram, which has pledged allegiance to ISIL. Have I omitted any countries where there is currently activity that is either ISIL activity or groups that have pledged allegiance to ISIL?

Secretary CARTER. We're watching ISIL all over the world, Senator. As you know, it has aspirations and tries to metastasize, uses the Web. I mean, you—we have had—and Director Comey's made this very clear—Americans who have self-radicalized——

Senator KAINE. That—actually, that——

Secretary CARTER. And so——

Senator Kaine. That's going to be my——

Secretary Carter.—this is a——

Senator Kaine.—next question.

Secretary Carter.—phenomenon that is around the world. We're watching it around the world—not just ourselves, but in law enforcement and intelligence circles. It's one of the reasons why ISIL needs to be defeated.

Senator Kaine. In terms of kind of kinetic activities by the military, though, am I right that currently, it's Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Libya, and then the deployment of troops to Cameroon?

Secretary Carter. It depends on what you mean by that.

You want to go ahead, Joe?

General Dunford. Senator, we don't currently have operations ongoing in Yemen—direct operations against ISIL. We don't have operations against—Libya against ISIL. And our support in Cameroon is Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) support in support of operations against Boko Haram.

Senator Kaine. Okay. But, Secretary Carter——

Secretary Carter. We can get you what we're doing——

Senator Kaine. Yeah.

Secretary Carter.—in each country. But, it's——

[The information referred to follows:]

The Department of Defense is currently engaged in activities against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other terrorist groups in several countries in the Middle East, West Africa, Libya, and Afghanistan.

Middle East: In the Middle East, the Department's counter-ISIL efforts are focused in Syria and Iraq.

Iraq: The military activities in Iraq seek to deny ISIL safe haven and build local partner capacity. The Department along with Coalition partners are conducting an ongoing air campaign to limit ISIL's freedom of movement, constrain its ability to reinforce its fighters, and degrade its command and control. To bolster partner capacity, the Department is advising and assisting Iraqi Security Forces, and is training and equipping Iraq's security forces. The United States military expects to deploy a specialized expeditionary targeting force to Iraq, with the Government of Iraq's permission, to further pressure ISIL.

Syria: The military activities in Syria seek to dismantle ISIL's leadership, to work relentlessly with the help of Coalition partners to deny ISIL safe haven, and to enable capable, motivated local forces on the ground to fight ISIL and achieve a lasting defeat. Towards that end, the Department is providing ammunition and equipment packages on a case-by-case basis to appropriately vetted local counter-ISIL forces engaged in fighting ISIL, supporting these ground forces with increased Coalition airstrikes, and introducing a small number of advisors to cooperate with opposition forces.

Yemen: Although the Department is watching with significant concern the actions of ISIL affiliates in Yemen, this has not yet required direct military action.

Africa: The approach to counter the impact of ISIL-affiliated groups in Africa is generally to work by, with and through partners.

Libya: The overall U. S. Government policy in Libya is to support the United Nations-led negotiations process to bring about a unified government; without a unified government, the United States will not have a reliable counter-terrorism partner to combat ISIL in Libya. The Department also works closely with governments and partners across the region to support a range of security missions, including border security and information sharing. In cooperation with these partners, the Department is working to assess the extent of ISIL's presence in Libya and how best to counter the threat. Further, the Department is going after ISIL leaders wherever they operate. In Libya, for example, the United States military conducted an airstrike against ISIL's Libya leader, Abu Nabil, in November.

Lake Chad Basin: Similarly in the Lake Chad Basin region of West Africa, the Department is partnering with the nations in the region—Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria—who are committed to working together to defeat Boko Haram. To that end, the Department is providing airborne Intelligence, Surveillance and Re-

connaissance (ISR) support to contributing countries to improve the overall effectiveness of their counter-Boko Haram efforts. The U.S. forces in question are in the region to provide force protection for these ISR assets which will increase the Department's ability to assess the connections between Boko Haram and ISIL.

Afghanistan: In Afghanistan, the Department is taking this emerging threat seriously. Through the train, advise, and assist mission to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, the Department is supporting Afghanistan's efforts to deter the expansion of ISIL's affiliate in Afghanistan, the Islamic State in the Khorasan Province (IS-KP). Additionally, the Department is closely monitoring IS-KP's development and associations to ISIL-core in Iraq and Syria to evaluate whether IS-KP's emergence will have a meaningful impact on the threat environment in the region. United States forces in Afghanistan have the authority and capability to defend against IS-KP threats.

Chairman MCCAIN. I don't want to get into asking about non-DOD title activity, so I'll omit that, but just—I think the record, in the public record, about activities in those countries is fairly plain.

Secretary CARTER, you indicate we're watching ISIL in other countries. Is it fair to assume, based on your joint professional judgment, that ISIL continues to mutate and find adherents in other countries, and we may well have to contemplate DOD activity against ISIL in nations other than those that I've mentioned?

Secretary CARTER. It could come to that. And that's why I think we need to kill the source of it, which is in Syria and——

Senator KAINE. Iraq.

Secretary CARTER.—Iraq.

Senator KAINE. Is it fair to assume—you know, we pray that this is not the case, but that the death of Master Sergeant Wheeler may not be the last death of an American servicemember in this campaign to defeat ISIL?

Secretary CARTER. I think we need to be realistic. We are—our people will be in positions—they are right now, every day; there are people flying right now, there are people training and advising forces there, and they are in harm's way. There's no doubt about it.

Senator KAINE. And we've lost service personnel, before Master Sergeant Wheeler, not necessarily in direct combat or kinetic activities, but, as you say, they were in positions of danger because of their support for this mission against ISIL.

Secretary CARTER. Yes. Make no mistake, they are in harm's way in this fight against ISIL. No doubt about it.

Senator KAINE. In your professional judgment, your notion that the primary objective is the defeat of ISIL, how long will that take?

Secretary CARTER. It needs to be—I can't tell you how long it will take, but I think that the—it needs to be soon, which is why we're so intent upon strengthening our effort, which is why we are working with the Iraqis and trying to get them to field more Sunni forces, strengthening our training and equipping of Sunni forces, why we're prepared to do more with those forces in Iraq. The President's indicated that, and indicated a willingness for the Chairman and me to make him recommendations in that regard. So, to enable those Sunni forces so that they can take back the Sunni territories of Iraq. And, over in Syria, it's Raqqa.

Senator KAINE. If I can——

Secretary CARTER. And that's why the Syrian—the coalition forces that are intent—to get back to the question that Senator Graham was raising—they want to attack Raqqa and——

Senator KAINE. If I can——

Secretary CARTER.—take back Raqqa, which is occupied by ISIL. And they, therefore, deserve our support, and are receiving our support.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Secretary, when you say “soon,” let's just be realistic, sitting here today. Aren't we talking—I mean, with all the countries that we've mentioned, and your acknowledged possibility that there could be more, aren't we talking about an effort that is likely to be a multiyear effort, certainly well into the next administration?

Secretary CARTER. That's probably the case. And the reason is that the strategy is to—and this is an important part of the strategy, and we've said it right from the very beginning—is to support capable and motivated forces that can retake and hold territory, not to try to substitute for them. That's the only way to have a lasting victory. And that—it takes some time to identify those forces, to motivate those forces, to train those forces. It depends upon the political circumstances in both Iraq and Syria. So, it does depend upon the political circumstances. That isn't something that is anything other than a very real factor there. But, that's necessary in order to have a lasting defeat, because we want ISIL not only to be defeated, but it has to stay defeated. That means the people who live there need to govern themselves and restore the peace and order. That's what takes the time, is to develop those forces. It is hard work, but that's what we're doing in Iraq, and that's what we're doing in the new train-and-equip program in Syria. It will take some time.

Senator KAINE. Mr. Chair, I'll just conclude and say that I think that that answer, about the complexity and the fact that this, under any circumstances, is going to take significant time, is a very relevant one for us. The administration's position about the authority to wage this war is based upon an authorization that was passed on September 18, 2001, before many of us were here, that specifically says the President is authorized to use force against those who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001. I would just renew my observation that I think it would have been far beyond the contemplation of the Members of Congress who voted on that at the time, and it's certainly beyond the contemplation of those of us who did not vote on that at the time, that those words would be applying, 15 years later, to an effort in the countries I just mentioned that may mutate to other countries that is, by the admission of our witnesses today, likely to take a good deal more. I think it's very much time that Congress revisit the question of this authorization and try to provide some underlying legal justification for the ongoing military action.

With that, Mr. Chair, I thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Fischer.

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary CARTER, would you assess ISIL and al-Nusra to be among the most capable rebelled groups that are on the Syrian battlefield?

Secretary CARTER. I would. They—they're ferocious, they are extremely cruel and brutal. Of course, some of these forces that are not trying to brutalize the population, but trying to fight Assad, are, as has been indicated, more moderate Syrian forces, and they don't behave that way, and that's why they deserve to be, and will be, part of the Syrian political future after Assad.

Senator FISCHER. Are you concerned that the Russian and Iranian attacks are going to further polarize the battlefield and we're going to see more moderate fighters cooperate with ISIL and al-Nusra because those groups are more capable?

Secretary CARTER. Well, that's precisely the point I've made to the Russians. The way I put it is, they—pouring gasoline on the civil war in Syria by supporting Iraq, and they're going to—they're going to enhance the very extremism that they say they fear, and they have every reason to fear, because now ISIL and other groups, including Syrian opposition groups of all stripes, are turned against Russia. Russia's had very bitter experience with extremism in their own country. This is why their actions are not consistent with their words and are—I keep using the phrase "wrongheaded."

Senator FISCHER. Have you—

Secretary CARTER. They say they're doing one thing, and they're actually doing another.

Senator FISCHER. Have you told Russia not to attack units that have been trained by the United States or to avoid certain areas where U.S.-affiliated groups may be operating? Or have you indicated to the Russians in any way that the United States will respond to such attacks?

Secretary CARTER. Well, we've certainly indicated that we intend to prosecute our counter-ISIL campaign unchanged, and we don't intend to make any changes, and that we're determined to do that. And we haven't.

Senator FISCHER. So, you have communicated to the Russians that, if there are attacks on United States-trained troops—or United States-trained units in any way, that we will respond.

Secretary CARTER. I've said earlier in this testimony, and I've said publicly, that we have an obligation to our—the forces that we've trained and equipped, to protect them. We intend to do that.

Senator FISCHER. But, that does not include the coalition-trained troops—units. Is that correct?

Secretary CARTER. Well, we don't control all of the opposition forces to Assad. This gets back to the earlier question. Our train-and-equip program that the Department of Defense runs is oriented towards fighters whose principal preoccupation is fighting ISIL. There are others who are fighting Assad, and they do come under attack by the Russians. And that's why—and—because some of them—

Senator FISCHER. Would it—

Secretary CARTER.—deserve to be part of the Syrian political future, that's a serious mistake on Russia's part.

Senator FISCHER. Would it be a serious mistake on Russia's part to attack any units that have been trained by other agencies be-

sides the Department of Defense? Would we have a response in that case?

Secretary CARTER. I—that's something we'd have to talk about separately, Senator.

Senator FISCHER. Under Secretary Christine Wormuth stated that Article 2 of the Constitution allows the President to use force against Assad if he attacks Syrian rebels trained by the United States. I would assume that a similar determination has been made with respect to using force against Russian planes if they attack United States-trained rebels. Is that true?

Secretary CARTER. Let me just repeat what I said about the—for the Department of Defense forces that we are training and equipping in Syria, we have an obligation to protect them. They're fighting ISIL. They're far from the territory that is contested or where the Russians are operating. But, we do have an obligation to defend them.

With respect to other Syrian opposition forces and so forth, that's something we'd have to discuss in a closed—

Senator FISCHER. Would the United States take action against Russian planes if Russian planes were attacking United States-trained units?

Secretary CARTER. I—just to repeat, we have indicated that we have an obligation, we have options, to protect our people, whom we have trained, against attack.

Senator FISCHER. I would appreciate if you could provide us with some more information for the record. Specifically, if United States forces have the legal authority to intervene if Assad's forces attack United States-trained fighters, but not if Russia attacks such fighters, if you could provide some clarification there; specifically, legal authority.

Secretary CARTER. Will do. But, the short form is, as I say, we have an obligation, I believe we have the legal authority to do that. But, I'm happy to put that in more detail.

[The information referred to follows:]

Although the Department's lawyers would have to analyze the facts and circumstances present at the time, the Administration has concluded that, under appropriate circumstances, U.S. forces have sufficient legal authority to provide combat support to vetted Syrian counter-Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) groups that the Department has trained or equipped who come under attack by Syrian government forces, consistent with the right of U.S. self-defense, if the action is necessary to address effectively the threat posed by ISIL to the United States and Iraq and meets the international law requirements of necessity and proportionality. A similar factual and legal analysis would need to be conducted in the event those groups are attacked by Russian forces.

Secretary CARTER. And then, there are other aspects that you're alluding to that we'd simply have to talk about in closed session.

Senator FISCHER. Okay.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator King.

Senator KING. Mr. Secretary, before Senator Graham began his important line of questioning, I wrote, in my notes, "The opposition will never push Assad out as long as Russia and Iran are all-in." I think that's just the reality. And the question is, What do we do about that? There will be no—we can't say, "Well, there'll be a political solution, there'll be negotiations." The negotiations will flow

out of the military situation. They've already shown they're not going to negotiate as long as they think they're solidly in power, which they clearly think they do. On the other hand, talking about a no-fly zone, which would bring us in direct conflict with the Russian air force, raises very large geopolitical questions.

But, give me some more thoughts on Senator Graham's line of questioning. Let's be realistic. You know, wishing is not going to make a policy. Assad is going to be there as long as Russia and Iran are willing to stay all-in. How do we change their calculus without a significant additional commitment of military power?

Secretary CARTER. Two things. The—first of all, the—Russian support to Assad is having the effect of increasing and catalyzing and motivating the opposition to Assad. I believe that both the Russians and the Syrians will see the effects of that on the battlefield. You're right, there will be—conditioned by the military situation on the ground there.

With respect to the political transition and at what point Russia would recognize that its actions were fueling Syria's civil war and fueling the extremism it fears, I can't say—speak to that.

Senator KING. That's what that—

Secretary CARTER. Now, that is—

Senator KING. They—

Secretary CARTER.—what Secretary—

Senator KING. The—

Secretary CARTER. Kerry is exploring with the Russians.

Senator KING. The Russians—

Secretary CARTER. But, I can't—

Senator KING.—have to decide—

Secretary CARTER.—say when and whether they will reach that conclusion.

Senator KING. They have to decide that ISIS is a bigger threat to them than the loss of Assad. And I don't know when that's going to occur; but I agree with you, that's the narrow diplomatic opening. But, right now, they seem to be trying to have it both ways. You—as you point out, they can't. As long as they prop up Assad, they're essentially propping up Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Secretary CARTER. This is—

Senator KING. Because Assad is—

Secretary CARTER. This is the—

Senator KING.—the stimulus.

Secretary CARTER.—logical contradiction in their approach. There's no question about it. I've said that from the day that it started, and I said that to the Russian counterpart, why it's so wrongheaded, their approach. And at what stage they'll recognize that, I don't know. I do commend Secretary John Kerry for talking to them and trying to find a different way, but they'd have to reach that recognition, and a part of that will be learned on the battlefield, and part of it will be learned in terms of extremism and how it is turned on Russia.

Senator KING. But, I think the question that the administration has to address is, How do we ratchet up pressure on Assad to change the military calculus in such a way that it's going to move that calculation?

Let me just change the subject for a minute. Both of you used the term, with regard to the Iraqi army, "capable, motivated Iraqi forces." Isn't that an oxymoron? You, yourself, have pointed out that this—that's what's been missing in Iraq. Is there any likelihood that that's changing? Do we—

Secretary CARTER. There are some—

Senator KING.—have any intelligence on that?

Secretary CARTER. There are some, but not nearly enough. For example, the Counter-Terrorism Service, the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS), which has been trained by the United States over time, is an effective, capable, motivated force. What we lack enough of in Iraq are capable and motivated Sunni forces. That is the type of force that is in short supply, and that is why it's so important that the Government of Iraq continue to recruit Sunnis, pay them. We will equip them and train them, and we'll support them in the battlefield. But, it will require Sunni forces to retake Sunni territory—

Senator KING. Does Abadi understand that in his gut, or is he just giving lipservice to this inclusion? Because if he doesn't, if this isn't real inclusion, we're sunk.

Secretary CARTER. He has been consistent in what he has told us, and—

Senator KING. But, is his actions—

Secretary CARTER.—including—

Senator KING.—are his actions bearing that out?

Secretary CARTER. I think you have to be—I'd have to be candid and say that Prime Minister Abadi does not have his—complete sway over everything that happens in Iraq. We have insisted that anything we do to support Iraqi forces must be by and through the Government of Iraq. But, very clearly—and you see it—there are militias of various kinds, Shi'a militias, that are inadequately under the control of the government in Baghdad, and that's one of the challenges there. But, the forces—

Senator KING. Well—

Secretary CARTER.—we support are those that are under the control of Prime Minister Abadi. I have talked to him, and I believe he is sincere in wanting to do the right thing there. But, again, wanting to do the right thing and having a complete authority are two different things in Baghdad. I think his authority is growing in that regard, but we do not yet have all the Sunni forces recruited, paid, enrolled, trained, and so forth, that we need and want.

Senator KING. Well, I certainly hope we'll use our influence to the maximum, because if that doesn't—if that inclusion doesn't happen, then this whole enterprise is for naught.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Ernst.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, thank you for being here today. Thank you very much for your service.

It's a very difficult time, General Dunford. I was in theater with a handful of colleagues about the week before you were in theater. I was very disturbed at what I see going on on the ground. It's a very tumultuous time.

Chairman Dunford, you did state that we need to take the fight to ISIL, and we need to continue the momentum. It's concerning, because to continue the momentum, we actually have to have momentum, going forward. And, right now, the only group that I see in Iraq that's fighting ISIL that has momentum is the Kurdish Peshmerga. Again, everybody knows how I feel about this. They've been great allies to us. In testimony before this committee over the past several months, we've had many, many prestigious military—former military commanders and governmental officials, such as General David Petraeus, General Mike Hayden, General Jack Keane, and, of course, former Secretary Bob Gates. And all of them agree that we really do need to enhance our support to the Iraqi Kurds as part of a more comprehensive strategy against ISIS.

And I'm very concerned that right now our current strategy piecemeals the weapons, the equipment, and—my gosh, we have so many various types of calibers of weapons—that's going from our coalition partners and the United States to the Kurdish Peshmerga. As a logistician, as a transporter, you know, supported those forces, our forces in Iraq, I know how difficult this would be for any army, that we are piecemealing so much up to the Peshmerga.

So, what is our strategy to develop a more capable Peshmerga force for the long-term fight for ISIS? Secretary Carter, if you could address that, please.

Secretary CARTER. Absolutely. You're absolutely right. The Kurdish Peshmerga are an excellent example of capable and motivated ground forces. And so, they have taken and held territory. We support the—and most recently, of course, in the operation conducted this past week.

With respect to equipping them—and you know from your logistics background, as you indicated very well—that rapidity and certainty of supply are very important to them. And we have a policy of routing equipment to the Kurdish Peshmerga through the government of Baghdad and—I think that's where—the hinge on which your question turns—for the reason—to get back to what Senator King was asking earlier—that our approach to Iraq is to try to support a multisectarian government in Baghdad. So, we're trying to do both: supply the Peshmerga and support Prime Minister Abadi as the leader of the country overall.

Now, in the early days, that led—that issue led to some delay in our supplies to the Kurdish Peshmerga. Those delays do not occur now. So, we—and, by the way, it's not just us; I think there are more than 14 other countries that are shipping tons and tons—

Senator ERNST. Quite a few.

Secretary CARTER.—of question to the Kurdish—

Senator ERNST. Quite a few.

Secretary CARTER.—Peshmerga. And so, I do not believe there now is a bottleneck in our supply to the Kurdish Peshmerga. We still do go through the routine of shipping through and with the permission of the government of Baghdad, for the very simple reason that we want to stick up for the principle of—

Senator ERNST. I do believe that we need to do a better job at this.

General Dunford, just very quick, if I could turn to you. How do the Iraqi Security Forces, or the Iraqi Army—how do their maneuver, fires, and effects units compare to the Kurdish Peshmerga's units?

General DUNFORD. I think the best of the Iraqis, the CTS forces and some of the brigades we trained, compare favorably to the Peshmerga. The Peshmerga also have, you know, very competent forces. But, I think the best of the Iraqis are about comparable to the Peshmerga.

Senator ERNST. Okay. And we're utilizing them to the best of our capability?

General DUNFORD. We are. We—and, Senator, that's an important question, because the one thing that the commanders told me is, those brigades that we actually have put through training, there is a qualitative difference in their performance. There's two brigades, for example, surrounding Ramadi right now that have gone through our training program, and those two brigades have performed at a much higher level than the other units, as well as the CTS, the Counter-Terrorism Service, who's also performed very well.

Senator ERNST. So, you believe that training and advising and assisting below the division level would be very important in any future operations.

General DUNFORD. I do——

Senator ERNST. For——

General DUNFORD. From a training perspective, in particular, yes, Senator.

Senator ERNST. I do believe that needs to be part of our decision-making process as we move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Dunford, in your testimony, you went over a number of areas that we need to focus on in our fight to defeat ISIL. And you said that we need to do more to cut the flow of foreign fighters to ISIL. Can you briefly describe what we're doing now and what more we need to do in this area?

General DUNFORD. I can, Senator. I had an—we have a team on the ground. They're part of a ten-nation coalition that's working on foreign fighters right now. But, it's mostly a military view of foreign fighters. And so, when I sat down and spoke to that team, you know, one of the challenges that became clear is that we really don't have, amongst all the coalition, kind of a common view of where the foreign fighters come from, how they move back and forth into the area, but, more importantly, not much of a track on where they go once they leave back to their home country. So, from my perspective—and this is an area that Secretary Carter and I have spoken to Secretary Kerry about last week—from my perspective, we need to do much more: one, to get a view of foreign fighters as a whole, and then make sure we maximize the legal, the military, and the political tools that are available to us to cut off the flow of foreign fighters.

Senator HIRONO. So, is this an area that we're going to see some kind of a measurable improvement?

General DUNFORD. Senator, for me, when I came back from my visit, there are two areas that I think we need to focus on to move the campaign forward. Two of many. The two that I personally engage on is, one, foreign fighters, and the other is intelligence.

Senator HIRONO. So, you're—we're going to see some appreciable, measurable improvements. And I know you can't talk about the intelligence side of things in this setting.

So, Secretary Carter, in response to a question, you said that the timeframe for defeating ISIL is—it better be soon. And, from everything that we understand, this is—this whole area of the world is a—very complicated. And so, it is, I realize, difficult to really hone in, I suppose, on what a reasonable timeframe may be. At the same time, with regard to Assad, there were indications that he was about to collapse, that his regime was about to collapse. But, now that Russia has come in to bolster the Assad regime, two questions: How long do you think that Assad can be propped up by Russia's actions? Two, do you think that Putin really is looking at a long-term scenario, where Assad stays in place, or is he much more interested, long term, in the stability of Syria for Russia's own interests?

Secretary CARTER. I can't say what Vladimir Putin is thinking about Assad's future, but I can tell what his behavior suggests. That is that he is—does want to support, at least for now, Assad, avoid the collapse of the Syrian state, which, as you indicated, I think he believed could occur, and that was one of the things that spurred his support—enhanced support for Assad. I've told you what I think of that approach. I think that it has the—it's going to backfire, and that is have the opposite of the effect that he is seeking. It enhances the opposition to Assad, and it also enhances the extremism he says he fears. So, it's not a very sensible strategy, but that appears to be what his behavior is—

Senator HIRONO. Well, that—

Secretary CARTER.—suggests.

Senator HIRONO. That appears to be his immediate goal, but I think that Putin is also smart enough to figure out that if he really wants stability in Syria, he may not be able to get it as long as Assad is in power.

I wanted to get to the no-fly zone. What would we need to do—if a no-fly zone is declared in Syria, what would we need to do to make sure that that no-fly zone sticks?

Either one of you.

Secretary CARTER. Yeah, I'll start, and then maybe the Chairman can say.

So, we have now, for quite a while, and preceding my time as Secretary of Defense, analyzed the possibility of no-fly zones. I've tried to give you some of the—an indication of some of the considerations there. That would involve operating in the part of the country which is not generally where we're conducting air operations now and where there are Syrian air defenses.

Senator HIRONO. Yes.

Secretary CARTER. If we were going to put air crews in that environment, we would have to take care of those air defenses, which is a substantial military undertaking in its own—

Senator HIRONO. So, one scenario could—

Secretary CARTER.—right.

Senator HIRONO.—be that Assad would be—would not abide by a no-fly zone, and we would need to protect—

Secretary CARTER. No. I think you have to—

Senator HIRONO.—it. Therefore, we would be in—

Secretary CARTER.—assume it would be contested.

Senator HIRONO.—direct conflict—

Secretary CARTER. Yeah, I think you have to assume—

Senator HIRONO.—with Assad.

Secretary CARTER.—that these—an air—no-fly zone would be contested by Assad, because—

Senator HIRONO. Yes.

Secretary CARTER.—its very intent was to engage his air force. Just, again, to get back to Senator Graham's point, we have not undertaken to have United States forces engage Assad's forces in a war for control—

Senator HIRONO. That's probably one of the reasons—

Secretary CARTER.—of Syria.

Senator HIRONO.—with that kind of—

Secretary CARTER. We haven't taken that step.

Senator HIRONO.—excuse me—with that kind of likely scenario, it's probably one of the reasons that we hesitate in—

Secretary CARTER. That's a—

Senator HIRONO.—creating a no-fly zone.

Senator HIRONO.—substantial and new military undertaking. Likewise—

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

Secretary CARTER.—zones on the ground would be have to be defended, as well, so there are military implications to the declaration of such zones. We have thought them through, but we have not made recommendations to—

Senator HIRONO. Thank you very much, Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. What you're saying is the strongest nation in the world with the most capable military can't even establish a no-fly zone to protect people from being barrel-bombed by Bashar Assad. That's—it's an embarrassing moment.

Secretary CARTER. Just to be—

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Tillis.

Secretary CARTER.—clear, Chairman, we could do it. I—but I—

Chairman MCCAIN. Of course we could do it. People like General Petraeus and General Keane and every other military leader that I have know of—and we're talking about having to shoot down all the—all we have to do is protect it and tell them not to fly into it, show—history shows that they won't, if they're going to get shot down.

Senator Tillis.

Senator TILLIS. General Dunford, Secretary Carter said that the Russian presence in Syria has not affected the pace or the scope of United States operations there. Is that because the pace is slow and the scope is narrow? How does that—I mean, how does that happen, when we have the administration saying that we're not going to have any sort of conflicts with Russian air presences in Syria? It would seem like it is affecting the pace and scope. Do you agree with Secretary Carter?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I do. We are—because we're focused on ISIL, and the Russians are largely conducting operations to the west, we are not operating in the same area as the Russians right now. We've had two or three incidents where we've had contact with Russian aircraft, and those preceded the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed on the 20th of the month.

Senator TILLIS. So, that—I guess that goes back to what Chairman McCain said. A part of that is because we're not necessarily providing support to those who are not trained, who are trying to take the fight to Assad but were not specifically trained by us. Is that—I mean, is that—

General DUNFORD. That's correct, Senator. We're operating in two different areas.

Senator TILLIS. I want to get to Iraq, and specifically in your meetings in Iraq. First, I'd like an update on Iranian presence there; and then, secondly—I've only been here for ten months, and the discussion about having the Iraqi government reengage the Sunnis is already a broken record. Over the last year, is there any tangible evidence that they've actually acted on the words—

General DUNFORD. Senator—

Senator TILLIS.—of reengaging?

General DUNFORD. Yeah. Senator, with the caveat that we're not satisfied with the outreach to the Sunni, and very aware that that's a necessary condition for us to be successful, is that we actually do have an inclusive government, inclusive of the Sunni, there has been some progress. For example, in the Anbar Province, there was an agreement to train and equip 8,000 Sunni. We've had about 5,000 that have been identified, have been recruited, and have been trained, of that 8,000 number. So—and that's slow progress—

Senator TILLIS. Is that more—

General DUNFORD.—for some—

Senator TILLIS. Is that more transactional—sorry, General Dunford, I want to be sensitive to time—is that more of a transactional win, or do you—are you seeing any sort of systemic changes that are going to make sure that that remains sustained and that we build on it?

General DUNFORD. I can't tell you that I've seen systemic changes, Senator.

Senator TILLIS. I don't think there is any.

What about the Iranian presence in Iraq right now? Where are they? What are they doing? What should we be concerned with?

General DUNFORD. Well, they still have the provisional forces that are there.

Senator TILLIS. So, that's—

General DUNFORD. Soleimani's—

Senator TILLIS.—still around 1,000?

General DUNFORD. You know, Senator, the numbers have been bounced around. I think it's been more—you say 1,000?

Senator TILLIS. Uh-huh.

General DUNFORD. Yeah, I think there's more than 1,000 Iranians that are on the ground in Iraq.

Senator TILLIS. In Syria?

General DUNFORD. In Syria, we think the numbers are probably something less than 2,000, is our assessment.

Senator TILLIS. Secretary Carter, I appreciate you mentioning Sergeant Wheeler. I know that he was from Oklahoma, but he and his wife and four sons, including a 3-month-old, live down in North Carolina. I think that, in that particular operation, you made a comment that those are the—those are operations that are probably occurring frequently, if—not a daily basis, but frequently, and American soldiers are at risk. In my opinion, I think the Peshmerga would consider that a combat operation. Do you consider what Sergeant Wheeler was doing a combat operation?

Secretary CARTER. Sure. He was killed in combat. It—that wasn't the intent, obviously. He was accompanying those forces. But, when he saw that they were running into trouble, he very heroically acted in a way that all the reports suggest spelled the difference between the success and failure of that important mission.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

Secretary CARTER. So, it clearly was a——

Senator TILLIS. My final——

Secretary CARTER.—heroic.

Senator TILLIS.—question. I want to start with General Dunford.

General Dunford, were you consulted by the President before he vetoed the NDA?

General DUNFORD. I was not, Senator.

Senator TILLIS. Do you consider the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) being—having been passed either positive or negative to the men and women in uniform in your efforts?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think my job is to identify the requirements that we need to support the force——

Senator TILLIS. Do you think some of those requirements were fulfilled by our passage of the NDAA?

General DUNFORD. There were—absolutely, sir.

Senator TILLIS. Okay. And——

General DUNFORD. Inside the ND——

Senator TILLIS.—as a result of the veto, those requirements are not going to be fulfilled unless we can come up with a solution?

General DUNFORD. Unless there's a solution, Senator.

Senator TILLIS. Thank you.

Senator—or, Secretary Carter, were you consulted by the President before he vetoed the NDAA?

Secretary CARTER. I was, yes.

Senator TILLIS. What was your recommendation to him?

Secretary CARTER. My recommendation was to support his veto.

Senator TILLIS. Was to support his veto?

Secretary CARTER. I did—I supported it. I'll tell you why. Two——

Senator TILLIS. That was going to be my next question.

Secretary CARTER. Sure. Two principal reasons. The first is that I—and I started saying this in March, and I—it—I believe it——

Senator TILLIS. Mr. Carter, I'm going to be out of time. There may be other people——

Secretary CARTER. Well, let me just——

Senator TILLIS.—following up with it, but I——

Secretary CARTER.—tell you what those two——

Senator TILLIS. Let me—let me finish.

Secretary CARTER. It's an important subject.

Senator TILLIS. Then, to the extent the Chair will let you continue, I will defer to him.

But, are you telling me, then, that you think that the President's veto leaves our military—of the NDAA—better than with it?

Secretary CARTER. I—the President's veto of the NDAA is something that reflected two facts, just to get back to what I was going to say. One is that we need—and I believe the Department of Defense needs—budget stability greater than a 1-year horizon—

Senator TILLIS. Taking a step back—

Secretary CARTER.—and a foundation of base funding that is adequate—

Senator TILLIS. Mr. Secretary, nobody on this—

Secretary CARTER.—to our needs—

Senator TILLIS.—committee disagrees with you. That's a well-worn path in discussions that goes all the way back to sequestration. But, I find it remarkable, given the circumstances we're in now and the testimony today, that we would take a step back with this NDAA while we continue to fight that fight, because that's going to require a willing administration. One thing's clear to me, this administration is not willing to confront the challenges that these men and women have in uniform today. Taking a step back in these dangerous times, I don't think makes sense. I respectfully disagree with your recommendation to support the veto.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Secretary CARTER. Well, if I can just say, I think that I—just to say what I think we need. What we need is what I hope is going on now, which is a true budget agreement, where Washington comes together behind a honest, straightforward budget with some multiyear horizon. That's what the Department deserves, and that's what I've been saying for months. Perhaps that is occurring as we speak.

But, I can only be honest and say what I think is best for the Department. That's, honestly, what we need. I realize that no individual member or individual committee can deliver that. It requires a coming together of gridlocked Washington behind an overall budget deal. I fervently hope that that occurs. I know there's some indication—I'm not involved in it—over the last couple of days that that might occur, and that is what I have been urging ever since March. I fervently hope that can occur. That's what the troops deserve. That's what the world needs to see.

Chairman MCCAIN. I would point out that Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) will be part of this agreement, as well.

Mr. Secretary, if you want to complete your answer, please continue. Or have you completed it?

Secretary CARTER. There's just one other aspect that I'd ask the committee, also apropos of the NDAA. There are a number of reforms that we have requested now for several years consecutively that have been denied in the authorization bill. I'd ask for—

Chairman MCCAIN. For example?

Secretary CARTER.—that they be—some having to do with healthcare, some having to do with readjustments in force structure. These are things that the relevant armed services have determined are the optimal use of their resources. And the authority to carry out those reforms has been denied. And I'd just appeal to you

not to—to allow those reforms, because it is the professional judgment of the Department of Defense that better use for those funds can be had. In years when it's difficult to find funding for the Federal Government—and I understand all the reasons for that—we have to use every dollar we do get to the—for the—to best use. And we're not able to do that with some of the restrictions that are in the NDAA. That's another reason why I'd ask you to reconsider some of its provisions.

Thank you for the time to elaborate on that, Senator.

Chairman MCCAIN. Well, I'd also point out that there's about \$11 billion in savings, including in a mandatory 7-and-a-half-percent-per-year reduction in headquarters staff, which we'll be glad to show you the dramatic growth in those, tooth-to-tail, and many other reforms that have been made. I look forward to looking at further reforms with you as we begin new hearings when we resolve this issue and further very necessary reforms that we feel are called for.

I'm proud of the reforms, frankly, that, in a bipartisan basis, this committee enacted. I am proud of the fact that we have dramatically revised the retirement system. I am proud of the fact that we are finally trying to get a handle on the cost overruns that has characterized acquisition practices.

So, you may have some concerns. I can't tell you, after being on this committee for nearly 30 years, how proud I am of the bipartisan product that we've produced. I hope that maybe sometime you might recognize that.

Senator Blumenthal.

Secretary CARTER. May I just second that?

Chairman MCCAIN. Yes, go ahead.

Secretary CARTER. We're proud, too. I—and I thank you. I thank you, personally. I don't mean to say there—

Chairman MCCAIN. No problem.

Secretary CARTER.—that reforms haven't been enacted. There are some additional ones that we would like to have. But, I salute the committee. The only way we can ask the taxpayer to give us more money for defense, which we need, is if we can also show that we use every dollar well. So, I appreciate your leadership in that regard.

Chairman MCCAIN. Well, I thank you, Mr. Secretary. We do look forward to it. We'll have hearings, beginning this week, on restructures that I—restructuring that I think are necessary. We want to work very closely with you. I'm very proud to work very closely with a graduate of West Point.

Senator Blumenthal.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

I thank both of you for your service to our Nation, and for your candid and forthright answers today in an area that is exceedingly difficult.

As you may know, I'm working with a number of colleagues who both supported and opposed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to strengthen United States policy toward Iran; in other words, to improve and strengthen that agreement—among other ways, by providing more military assistance to our allies in the area, and anticipating that some of the financial windfall will

go toward increased extremism and even terrorist violence in that area. So, to bolster the defenses and military capacity of our allies in that region, this legislation will reassert the United States policy that a nuclear-armed Iran will never be permitted. It will reaffirm our dedication to imposing sanctions related to terror financing and human rights abuses. It will ensure that our allies, most especially Israel, will be provided with the assets that they need so that their defense will be bolstered and they will be able to deter Iran.

General Dunford, you've just visited the area. Can you tell us what additional assets we can provide? Can you commit—and, Secretary Carter, I ask you to join in this question—that the United States will, in fact, bolster assets going to Israel and our other allies in the Middle East, and comment on this legislation?

Thank you.

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can't talk to the details now. I can tell you that the Minister of Defense from Israel is here today for meetings with Secretary Carter. We'll have dinner with him this evening. As you probably know, they're developing their perspective on what cooperation further we might have with them, to include the details of capability development that I had some initial discussions with their Chief of Defense—Minister of Defense and Prime Minister last week during my visit.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. In the conversations that preceded our votes on the agreement, I was assured—and I think other colleagues were assured—that, in effect, Israel will receive all the necessary assistance to make sure that its qualitative edge is not only maintained, but enhanced. Is that the policy of the administration?

Secretary CARTER. Yeah, qualitative military edge of Israel is an important part of our overall policy toward the Middle East, and that's exactly what I'll be talking to—along with the Chairman—the Defense Minister of Israel about today. Of course, that's one ingredient of our overall support for Israel and also, I should add, other Gulf partners and allies.

I also need to add, since you're asking about the Iran nuclear agreement, the maintenance of the military option, which we are charged with continuing to do. I continue to pay personal attention to that. I believe the Chairman does, as well. Our efforts to counter Iranian malign influence around the region and protect our friends and allies. So, there are a lot of dimensions to what we do there.

All of that, which is our activity, remains unchanged with this Iran agreement. All of those things—the military option, support to Israel, support to other Gulf countries—that is longstanding pursuit of American interests in the Gulf, and we're going to keep doing that.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I recognize that the policy remains unchanged, but the military assets will have to be increased, won't they?

Secretary CARTER. We will be doing more with Israel. That's one of the reasons—that's one of the subjects of my discussions with Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon, as it was when I visited there a couple of months ago and he hosted me the way I'll be hosting him over the next couple of days.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Can you tell us whether you're satisfied with the progress that's been made in those discussions?

Secretary CARTER. He and I have a very good relationship, a very easy relationship, so these—we—these discussions are discussions among friends. We do things with Israel and have a closeness there that we have with very few other countries around the world. I can't go into all the details here, but we can share them separately. But, it's a very close defense—and a trusted defense relationship.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I would appreciate your sharing those details in a different forum. I am very interested in the details of the discussions that are underway now, and I want to be satisfied that we are fulfilling the commitments that were made to myself and my colleagues in the course of our discussions before the Iran agreement vote.

Thank you very much, to you both.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Sullivan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen.

You know, like Chairman McCain's statement today, General Petraeus was here recently, and in his testimony, he also emphasized that, in the Middle East, there's no easy answers, but that inaction has costs, whether it's others filling the vacuum, like we're seeing with Russia in the Middle East and in Syria, or whether United States credibility is undermined, especially when inaction contradicts policy statements. I think this is a—I think most of the members of the committee see this as a significant problem, not only in the Middle East, but beyond.

General Dunford, do you believe that inaction has its own costs? How does the U.S. military weigh the costs of inaction, of doing nothing, when you're presenting options to the President for—options on what we should be doing in the military—in the Middle East?

General DUNFORD. First of all, Senator, you know, I absolutely agree that inaction is unacceptable when we talk about protecting our national interests. So, there's no question about that.

And with regard to when we provide military options to a particular challenge, absolutely I think it's my responsibility to clearly articulate both the opportunity costs and the risk associated with not taking action against a particular issue.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you.

Secretary Carter, you know, many members of the committee have been concerned about United States inaction in another part of the world, in the South China Sea. A lot of us on this committee saw that inaction was raising costs and undermining U.S. credibility. There was a number of us who were complimentary of your speech at the Shangri-la Dialogue. I was going to express concern about that, but just read in the paper about the freedom of navigation operation that we evidently conducted inside a 12-mile zone of a built-up Chinese island, just yesterday. Is that true? Did we do that?

Secretary CARTER. We have made a commitment—and I appreciate your support—as part of our rebalance to the Asia-Pacific, which is so important to America's future. We're doing more at sea, we're doing more in the way of presence. Just to give a general answer to what you said, we have said, and we are acting on the

basis of saying, that we will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law permits——

Senator SULLIVAN. Did we send a destroyer yesterday inside the 12-mile zone of one of the——

Secretary CARTER.—to do that. There have been naval operations in that region in recent days, and there will be in the weeks and months——

Senator SULLIVAN. Inside the 12-mile zone of a China——

Secretary CARTER. I don't want to comment——

Senator SULLIVAN.—built-up——

Secretary CARTER.—on a particular operation, but——

Senator SULLIVAN. You don't want to comment? It's all over the press right now.

Secretary CARTER. I'm sure it is, but I—we reserve the right to conduct——

Senator SULLIVAN. If we do that within a built-up island that was undersea submerged rock, is that within—is that consistent with international law?

Secretary CARTER. Yes, it is.

Senator SULLIVAN. So, should we be doing that on a regular basis, in terms of freedom of navigation exercises?

Secretary CARTER. We will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law permits and whatever—whenever our operational needs require——

Senator SULLIVAN. It would be good to know, just for the committee's——

Secretary CARTER.—that we will——

Senator SULLIVAN.—perspective, whether or not the press reports are accurate on what we did.

Let me ask another question about another area in the world where it seems like United States inaction clearly seems to be inviting more Russian aggression, where Russian actions are changing facts on the ground. Mr. Secretary, in your confirmation hearing, you talked about the Arctic is going to be a major area of importance to the United States, but—strategically and economically in the future—but you said it's fair to say that we're late to the recognition of that. I think it's also fair to say that the Russians are not late to the recognition of that. Since your confirmation, the Russians have done the following in the Arctic: a new Arctic military command, four new Arctic brigade combat teams, 14 new operational airfields in the Russian Arctic, announcements of up to 50 new airfields in—by 2020, a 30-percent increase of Russian special forces in the Arctic, 40 icebreakers—we have two, one is broken—huge new land claims in the Arctic, increased long-range air patrols with their Bear bombers, the most since the Cold War, a major military exercise in March that caught the U.S. military completely off guard—45,000 troops, over 3,000 military vehicles, 41 naval ships, 15 submarines, 110 military aircraft, numerous elements of Russia's western military district and elite airborne troops in that exercise. A lot of this concerns the committee. In the NDAA, which the President vetoed, we had a unanimous agreement here to have—to create an operations plan for the Arctic. That's an important step to ensuring we have continued good options in the Arctic.

Can I get your commitment, both of you, to work with this committee on a robust—a robust—military Operation-Plan that will enable us to check Russia's aggressions in the Arctic, keep our options open, and maintain our credibility in that important area of the world, given that that's in the NDAA right now?

Secretary CARTER. Yeah, you have mine. I appreciate your leadership in this regard. The Arctic is an important region for the United States, and actually for the entire world. So, we need to do more there. I appreciate the fact that you are a champion of that and can consider me a supporter. I appreciate—and we'll have a chance, actually, to discuss that in Alaska later this week—

Senator SULLIVAN. Yes, sir. Thank you.

General Dunford?

General DUNFORD. Yes, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman MCCAIN. Mr. Secretary, sometimes here in this committee we have a sense of frustration. The news reports, all day, are about a U.S. destroyer, naming the destroyer, going inside the 12-mile zone around these islands. Why would you not confirm or deny that that happened, since all the details and the action happened? This is what frustrates members of this committee, when it's out there in the media, throughout, saturating the media, and you won't even tell us. Is it—what—maybe you understand our frustration, here, Mr. Secretary. That's—

Secretary CARTER. I do understand your frustration, and I'd just match it with my own frustration, which is that—these are operations that we should be conducting normally, and—

Chairman MCCAIN. But, the American people should know about it. We're their representatives. You refuse to even confirm or deny something that is all over the media and confirmed by everyone? You come before this committee and say you won't comment on it? Why?

Secretary CARTER. Well, I don't—I'm going to not be coy with you. I don't like, in general, the idea of talking about our military operations. But, what you read in the newspaper is accurate. I don't want to say more than that. I don't want to say when, whether—

Chairman MCCAIN. Well, at least—

Secretary CARTER.—and how we operate anywhere in the world. One of the things—

Chairman MCCAIN. I don't that—

Secretary CARTER.—about freedom of navigation—

Chairman MCCAIN.—that the Senator asked you to tell why, when, and how. He just asked you to—whether you could confirm it, or not.

Secretary CARTER. I can.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you.

Mr. Donnelly—Secretary—Senator Donnelly.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to get back to Syria and to some of the questions the Chairman was asking about safe zones. We seem lost. We seem lost and at—confusion about what to do next, unable to put any real marker down or have any plan for success. The people are voting,

and they're voting with their feet. They're leaving. There's refugees all over the world now. We have the opportunity to set up safe zones. What I hear is, we're worried about the Russians, we're worried about the Syrians, we're worried about all of these things. I mean, at what point do we put a plan together, execute the plan, tell them what we're going to do, and say, "Stay out of the way"?

Secretary CARTER. With respect to a safe—I'd distinguished a safe zone from a no-fly zone. A safe zone is a zone on the ground. We have analyzed them and discussed them with partners in the region. They are principally not in regions where we would expect them to be contested so much by Assad as by ISIL and al-Nusra. Therefore, they have to be defended against that threat, and that's a military undertaking—

Senator DONNELLY. Are we unwilling to—

Secretary CARTER.—people in the region who—we have not made that recommendation. The reason—

Senator DONNELLY. At what point—how many people have to leave before we make that decision?

Secretary CARTER. Senator, let me go back to—if you create a zone like that, then you do have to ask who is going to come into the zone. Are there people who have left Syria who are going to return to Syria from Turkey or Europe to occupy a zone from which they didn't come? Are there people elsewhere in Syria who are going to come to that zone? So, you do have to ask yourself: For whom would it be attractive to be in such a zone? Then, secondly, who is going to defend—

Senator DONNELLY. Probably some of the folks in Germany and in other countries who would rather have stayed in their own country.

Secretary CARTER. If they wished to return to the part of the country for which the zone—in which the zone is created. But, again, it would depend on where it was, and it would be contested—

Senator DONNELLY. Well, let me ask you—

Secretary CARTER. So, this—

Senator DONNELLY.—in barrel bombs—we've talked this time and after time here—why are we unwilling to send a message to Assad that if he continues with barrel-bombing, we will stop him and crater his runways?

Secretary CARTER. We have not undertaken to engage, as the United States military, the Syrian military. We have not taken that step—

Senator DONNELLY. So, how do you ever stop the barrel-bombing?

Secretary CARTER. The way that the civil war in Syria will end, just to get back to what we've been saying repeatedly, is for Assad to depart and for there to be a political—

Senator DONNELLY. Why would he depart, at this point?

Secretary CARTER. Because the opposition to him is intense, and strengthening.

Senator DONNELLY. Well, as far as I can see, he's had three or four additional allies come onboard. If anything, the calculation for him is, his cards are getting better.

Secretary CARTER. Yeah. Again, our priority has been to combat ISIL. We are not, as the United States military, undertaking to combat Syrian——

Senator DONNELLY. Well, let me just ask you——

Secretary CARTER. That's not a decision——

Senator DONNELLY.—this. In the process of——

Secretary CARTER.—not a decision——

Senator DONNELLY.—combating ISIL, does the United States stand by as another nation barrel-bombs the people we're trying to protect?

Secretary CARTER. We have sought now, for some time, and continue to do, a political transition in Syria that would end the Syrian civil war. We have not pursued a military solution——

Senator DONNELLY. Well——

Secretary CARTER.—to that.

Senator DONNELLY.—I would just say, from my perspective—and I am not an expert like both of you—we seem lost. I have extraordinary confidence in the leadership at this table, but we seem lost. I would love to see alternate plans that may be out there.

General Dunford, I was in Iraq a few months ago, was with the Sunni tribal leaders, and I just want to ask your best military judgment. In spending time with them, they said, “Look, if you showed an interest in us, if you showed—you know, had a helicopter come by every now and then, showed you really wanted to provide us with guidance, with logistics, with advice, et cetera, that partnership, that friendship we've always felt, we'll be there. We'll get the job done.” Do you think they have that capability?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I do. There are Sunnis that absolutely can take the fight to the enemy, and we've seen that in the past.

Senator DONNELLY. So, while we try to continue to hope and pray that the Iraqi Security Force gets better, are we sitting here with Sunni tribal leaders who have the individuals who can actually start to move ISIS out of Ramadi?

General DUNFORD. I think if the central government would do better at outreach to the Sunni, we absolutely could recruit more, train more, equip more, and support more Sunni in the fight.

Senator DONNELLY. So, I think it's almost fair to say the team is ready to go; they just need to get the signal to go.

General DUNFORD. It would take some work, Senator, but there are people out there that we could put together to fight ISIL.

Senator DONNELLY. That's how we start to move ISIL out, I think.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED [presiding]. Thank you.

On behalf of Chairman McCain, let me recognize Senator Lee.

Senator LEE. Thank you.

Thank you, Secretary Carter and General Dunford, for appearing in front of our committee today, and for your service to our country.

The White House has been sending mixed and, at times, contradictory messages about what our interests are and what threats to our security exist in the Middle East. Many Americans are understandably coming to find our current strategy somewhat reminiscent of the old Warren Zevon song, since the President's reaction

to—it seems to be to send in lawyers, guns, and money whenever and wherever a crisis breaks out.

The situation in the Middle East is a very complicated problem for our current posture, but it's certainly not historically aberrational. For more than 100 years, this region has been dominated by either external powers or internal authoritarians who have destroyed cultural institutions and disrupted the natural development of societies. The decentralization of power in these states, compounded by radical Islamism and ancient sectarian grievances, amounts to a time-tested recipe for the kind of conflict and instability that we're seeing today and that tends to threaten our security.

We continue to receive mixed contradictory reports about the effectiveness of ongoing efforts to retain, train, and equip the Iraqi Security Forces. When I ask why we believe it will work this time around, I'm usually told by Defense officials something like the following, something like, "Well, we have a better political partner in Baghdad now than we did before, and we have a partner who will not repeat the mistakes of his predecessor." Now, this is not encouraging, as we know how quickly political institutions—political situations and calculations can change in the Middle East, particularly right now.

So, General Dunford, I'm more concerned by what your predecessor, General Dempsey, described as the "will to fight" factor among the ISF. I believe that extends beyond simply having a better leader in Baghdad. Do you believe the kind of united Iraq that we have seen for the past century—that is with borders drawn by the British and French, and held together either by a Western-backed monarchy or a Ba'athist dictator—is something for which the people of Iraq have the genuine will to fight, especially when they don't have emergency assistance from a coalition like they have right now?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I think, for most people in Iraq, it's a lot more local than it is national. I do think that if a central government, for example, would outreach to the Sunni in the Anbar Province and provide basic services, that we would get Sunni fighters that would fight on behalf of the government. We've seen that in the past.

Senator LEE. So, I'd like to expand the question a little bit more broadly, to places like Syria or Yemen. Do people of those countries have the will to fight for united governments in places where current territorial lines may have been imposed by a foreign force?

General DUNFORD. There's no evidence that I would know of that would indicate that they would.

Senator LEE. Unfortunately, I think that we're looking too hard for an easy answer—or a simple answer to some of these complicated questions. I encourage my colleagues and the American people to thoughtfully consider options in the Middle East before continuing down paths that I believe may lead to mission creep and to an indefinite United States military presence to prop up weak and sort of artificially created states designated around unsustainable boundaries.

Now, the Department of Defense's Syria train-and-equip program failed. It failed by a longshot. Define and train the level of fighters

desired under the vetting requirements established by Congress and the White House. Congress put these requirements in place because we were very concerned about who would be using U.S. assistance, and for what purposes they would be using it.

Secretary CARTER, does the failure of this program indicate to you that the viable ground force we desire for Syria simply does not exist within the parameters that the American taxpayer may be willing to support?

Secretary CARTER. Well, I was disappointed in it, as well, but I don't draw that conclusion. There are forces in Syria willing to fight ISIL and capable of fighting ISIL. The—we talked about the Kurd—Syrian Kurds as an example of that, the so-called Syrian Arab Coalition. In the new train-and-equip effort that we described today, we will look to identify and then support capable and motivated forces in—on Syrian territory that are willing to take on ISIL. We have identified some of them already. The new approach is to enable them, train them and equip them, rather than trying to create such forces anew, which was the previous approach.

And I do understand why that approach was taken, and, you're right, it was authorized by this committee last December. And I understand the considerations that went into that. I have concluded, and the President concluded, that that approach wasn't working the way that it was conceived of a year ago, and that's precisely why we've changed the approach.

So, we have a different approach that we think will allow us to gain more momentum and, in particular, to allow us to put pressure on the city of Raqqa, which is the self-declared capital of the caliphate. So, on the Syrian side of the counter-ISIL fight, that is our intent, and we're trying to gather momentum in that and several other ways that we detailed.

Senator LEE. Okay. Thank you.

I see my time's expired, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. On behalf of Chairman McCain, let me recognize Senator McCaskill.

Senator MCCASKILL. Yes. Senator Reed—

Thank you all for being here.

By the way, let me, just at the beginning of my questions, give a mention to Master Sergeant Joshua Wheeler. He is—there probably is no better example of someone who has run to danger for this country over and over and over again. I believe this was his 14th deployment. So, I wanted to mention his name in the hearing today. We all mourn his loss and the loss of his family, and we support them as they move through this trying time.

Senator Reed asked you about the new Syrian forces in northern Syria. Have we provided resupply to those forces?

General DUNFORD. We have, Senator.

Senator MCCASKILL. Okay. Have they successfully called in airstrikes?

General DUNFORD. They have, Senator.

Senator MCCASKILL. Okay. Can you tell us, for the record, how many?

General DUNFORD. I cannot, Senator. I can get that information for you. I don't know the number.

[The information referred to follows:]

Since the NSF were reinserted into Syria, they have facilitated 91 air strikes against ISIL as of 1 Dec 2015.

Senator MCCASKILL. That would be terrific.

On Iraq train-and-equip—as you all know, I have a tendency to read those Inspector General (IG) reports. The one that came out September 30th raised several concerns that I’m worried about. One is asking us to refurbish the conditions under which these Iraqis are training. The DOD IG recommends that the coalition work with the Iraqi Minister of Defense to devise and implement a plan that clarifies the contributions of Iraq and the United States to improve their living conditions. Evidently, they are—the IG is saying that we’re having desertions because they’re living in such squalor, in terms of the conditions under which they are training. I just think of the billions and billions on infrastructure we spend in Iraq, and I’m trying to get my arms around: Are we going to go in and fix up something that’s going to rot when we leave, or is Iraq going to step up and do what’s necessary to make these conditions palatable for our—the recruits?

General DUNFORD. Senator, what I would tell you—and this is my perspective, and I think this is where we’re at right now—is that our relationship with Iraq has to be transactional, and there has to be certain conditions that they would meet before we would provide support. That absolutely is the framework within which I’ll provide recommendations for any support to the Iraqi forces—would be that it would be based on their behavior and their willingness to be true partners and meet certain conditions that would indicate they’d be heading the direction that you described.

Senator MCCASKILL. Capital expenditures, you know, just really grate, I think, on many of us who have watched the amount of money that we wasted on capital expenditures in Iraq. On that same line of questioning, the Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles (MRAPs) that are coming from Afghanistan, the same IG report points out that many of them are missing parts, and there’s a real question whether they have the capability of maintaining these MRAPs, going forward. Once again, are there discussions about who is going to bear the costs of making these MRAPs that we’re giving them actually operational?

General DUNFORD. Senator, are you talking about the MRAPs we gave to the Afghan Security Forces?

Senator MCCASKILL. I’m talking about the ones—the excess ones that we’re moving over—United States is providing 250 MRAPs to the Iraqi Army. They’re excess defense items and being shipped to Iraq from Afghanistan. Those are the MRAPs I’m talking about.

General DUNFORD. Yeah. I can’t comment on what the arrangements are, but I’ll get that information for you, Senator, in terms of what arrangements were made of giving them. Typically, when we provide that equipment, it’s in as-is condition when we provide it to another country. I assume that’s the rule—

[The information referred to follows:]

The State Department is bearing the cost of the refurbishment and sustainment of the excess MRAPs that we transferred to Iraq. The contracted logistics vehicle used to pay was the Foreign Military Financing Program (Title 22 Grant Assistance).

Senator MCCASKILL. I just want to make sure we're not going to the expense of sending them something that isn't operational, that we don't want to have to spend a lot of money to fix up, and, secondly, that they don't have the capability of maintaining. You know, sustainability. I mean, Secretary Carter knows this has been a refrain from the very beginning. It does us no good to give them things if they cannot sustain it. Of course, that's one of the reasons that we're having the problems in Iraq we have right now, is they were politically incapable of sustainability.

Briefly, on a separate subject, I just want to bring this up. I won't go into the details here, but I am desperately trying to get at helping the veterans that were subjected to mustard gas experiments. I'm having a really difficult time with your folks about this. They're saying that even if I have the name of a veteran and the privacy waiver, they will not give me information out of your mustard gas database without a letter from the Chairman. I don't understand why this is so hard. Why is everyone not opening up these records and doing everything we can to get the word to these people? There are a lot of folks out there that were subjected to mustard gas experiments. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) wants to point at you. I'm hitting a wall at DOD on this. I really need a commitment from you all today that you will get me the information as to why this is—why me trying to help veterans who maybe have been exposed to mustard gas—why this should be so hard. Would you all be willing to make that commitment, that you will work with my office instead of—

Secretary CARTER. Yeah, I—

Senator MCCASKILL. They just keep throwing up roadblocks. I've been at this for months.

Secretary CARTER. Senator, I'm not familiar with this issue, but, as always, I will make sure that we support your request. I'll look into it, and we'll—with the Chairman—and we'll get back to you, as appropriate.

[The information referred to follows:]

The Department of Defense has established a process where congressional staff may provide a Privacy Act and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) release from each individual for whom they desire information, and we will provide a printout of information that was contained in the database. I understand that we have received and responded to a request from a Congressional office and provided information for two individuals. A letter from the Chairman is not required if the individual involved has given permission for the disclosure. Similarly, an individual may provide the Privacy Act and HIPAA release and ask for the information directly from the Department.

Senator MCCASKILL. And I've been waiting since July for evidence to back up your claim that there was justification for the \$36 million, 64,000 square-foot building in Afghanistan. There was a call for discipline for the people who had okayed that building. It's sitting empty. I've been asking since July as to—you said that you didn't think—Secretary Carter, you contested the findings and said that you didn't think disciplinary action was appropriate. I've asked what the evidence is that would indicate disciplinary action is not appropriate. I've been waiting since July. So, if you could get that on your To Do List, too, I would really appreciate it.

Secretary CARTER. I will do that.

Senator MCCASKILL. You've got an able helper behind you there who ought to help with this.

Thank you very much.

Senator REED. On behalf of Chairman McCain, let me recognize Senator Sessions.

Senator Sessions.

Thank you, Senator.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you very much.

Senator McCain laid out some serious criticisms of how we're being—how we're conducting our policy in the Middle East. I share most of those. I don't think they're little matters. They're important matters. I think we've made some mistakes and struggled in ways that are not well, not good. I think it's—so, I'll just leave it at that.

What I'd like to address today is the need for a strategy, long term, in the Middle East. I asked Kenneth Pollack, of the Brookings Institution, several months ago—he had mentioned in his statement, "This may take a long time." So, I asked him—the whole problem of extremism in the Middle East, this spasm of violence we're seeing throughout the entire region, how complex it is and how—and I asked him—and so, I followed up with him and said, "So, you're saying this could last 10, 20, 50 years." I remember very vividly. He looked at me, and he gave an answer you don't often get. "Yes." That was his answer.

So, we've—and do we need a strategy—a long-term strategy that could deal with that? I've asked that question to Walter Russell Mead, and he said he's never seen us, as a Nation, be so unfocused in a strategy, the historian that he is.

The entire panel, I believe, week before last—General Jimmy Jones, President Obama's National Security Advisor, General Keane, Ambassador, another scholar—all agree that we need a strategy, and we really don't have one.

Then I asked Secretary Gates, last week, and this is what he said that I think is relevant. He said, "My concern is that I don't see an overreaching—or overriding strategy on the part of the United States with this complex challenge for the next 20 or 30 years." One of the benefits of containment—and there are lots of disagreements about how to apply it and how the wars we've fought under it, and so on—but, I will always believe that critical to our success in the Cold War was that we had a broad strategy, called containment, that was practiced by nine successive administrations of both political parties. It had bipartisan support, the general notion of how to deal with this. So, we don't have anything like that with respect to the Middle East. I think that is long—and so, we're kind of dealing with each of these crises individually rather than backing up and saying, "What's our long-term game plan, here? Who are going to be our allies? Who are going to be our friends? Where do we contain? Where do we let it burn itself out?" We just haven't really addressed those long-term questions, because it seems to me we're thinking strictly in the short term of month-to-month.

What—I know we've got nine points, Secretary Carter, but I don't sense anyone in the region or anyone in the Congress believes that we have a deeply studied and long-term policy for the Middle

East that could extend for decades. First of all, do you think we need one? Do we have one?

Secretary CARTER. We have a strategy toward the Middle East. Many elements of it are, in fact, of longstanding—decades longstanding. Again, the—our strategy begins with the pursuit of American interests, and that involves protecting our own country and our people, defending longstanding friends and allies, who include the Gulf states and especially Israel, which was discussed already, opposing the introduction of nuclear weapons to the region, which gets us to the Iran circumstance, and, in the current matter of ISIL, protecting our people and our friends and allies against ISIL by defeating it where it began, which is in Iraq and Syria. We described, today, that—the implementation of the strategy in both of those places to defeat—degrade and defeat ISIL. So, we're doing that.

So, I—it is a complicated region. I called it kaleidoscopic in my statement. But, American interests are not unclear. They're clear. We—our strategy is intended to pursue those interests, and that is what we're doing. Strengthening the pursuit of that strategy is why the Chairman and I have been describing to you today the new steps we're taking in Iraq and Syria and with respect to unilateral actions.

Senator SESSIONS. Well, I know that's the position of the administration, but, frankly, our Middle East allies that we talk to and come and visit us don't feel confident that they know what the long-term goals of the United States are. Were they to defend Iraq against ISIL, who we'd shared shoulder-to-shoulder, General Dunford, for a decade? Are we going to pull out all troops? Apparently not, now, in Afghanistan, regardless of the situation on the ground. What about red lines in Syria? Are we going to honor those?

Look, you can say that, but I think it's clear that confidence in understanding of where we stand and what we're going to do for the next 10, 20, 30 years, as any leader of a Middle Eastern nation has got to think, and as we should think, as a great Nation, I don't think we're there.

So, I really believe more work needs to be done. I'm talking to my colleagues in the Senate. I believe we can reach a bipartisan policy. I really do. I don't think it's impossible. I'm going to work toward that goal.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Senator SESSIONS. One more thing. My time is over. But, I believe the Defense Department may underestimate the critical nature of the refugee crisis. This is not like Iran-Iraq war that went on for many, many years. This is impacting Europe right now. It is a humanitarian crisis. It's being exploited by everyone else in the Middle East that would like to come to Europe. Europe is facing what one top diplomat told me was the greatest crisis since the—World War II. I think we've got to think about this safe haven, these safe zones, and get busy on it. If we—and General Petraeus said it might have to have some of our people at risk, defensively, to try to protect those areas, but we wouldn't take a lot. You and I talked, Secretary Carter, about it. Can't we get moving on this? How many more millions are going to have to flee and being lined

up in areas that we don't—before we act? Just morally, my judgment is that Europe needs to know there is a place for these refugees to go, other than to flee the entire region. That will strengthen them. Can we not do that?

Quickly.

Secretary CARTER. Well, the—insofar as the refugees are coming from Syria—they're actually coming to Europe from several—

Senator SESSIONS. All over.

Secretary CARTER.—places, but, to the extent they're coming from Syria, this is why it is so important that the Syrian civil war be put to an end. Our approach to that is political. It's not military. That's been a persistent subject of discussion here. We have not undertaken to achieve that goal militarily. Our approach to that is political. We hope that that transition occurs and that the civil war in Syria ends. That is something that—

Senator SESSIONS. What if it takes three years? Can't we provide some sort of area there for people who are in danger to have safety and not have to leave the entire region?

Secretary CARTER. I'll just—I'd just repeat what I've said. We have analyzed it. I'm prepared to have shared with you the analysis we've done of safe zones, buffer zones, and no-fly zones. We have looked at the advantages and costs of those. The President has not taken them off the table, but we have not undertaken to create any of those zones at this time. I don't rule that out in the future, Senator. We're happy to discuss it with you, and discuss, in a different setting, the analysis that we have done.

Senator REED. On behalf of Chairman McCain, let me recognize Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. I want to thank the Chair. Also thank Senator Donnelly. Appreciate it.

I wanted to ask Secretary Carter—recently, the Iranians have actually tested a long-range missile, in violation of existing United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions. This is something that Ambassador Samantha Power has confirmed. In fact, if you look at what the Iranians have done post-agreement, not only have they tested this missile, but, of course, they've wrongfully convicted a *Washington Post* reporter in Iran, and they—of course, we've had a lot of discussion today about the cooperation between Russia and Iran undermining stability in Syria and our interests there.

So, I've also brought—been brought to my attention recently that the Supreme Leader of Iran has actually said, about the recent agreement, that, "Any imposition of sanctions at any level under any pretext, including repetitive and fabricated pretexts of terrorism and human rights on the part of any countries involved in the negotiations, will constitute a violation of the JCPOA."

So, here's my question to both of you, and primarily to you, Secretary Carter. What are we going to do about their violation of already existing U.N. resolutions when it comes to testing ballistic missiles and long-range missiles? You're the one that testified before this committee, the "I" in ICBM is "intercontinental." As I see it, already Iran is violating resolutions, with no response from us. Already the Supreme Leader is basically saying, "You impose sanctions on any reason, even our support for terrorism or other human rights violation, we're going to walk away from the JCPOA." So, do

you not agree that their violation of the missile resolution warrants a response from the United States of America? What is that response going to be? Because, at this point, I haven't seen any response.

Secretary CARTER. I think that it's—it needs to be very clear—it's certainly clear to us, in the Department of Defense—that the conclusion of the nuclear deal with Iran, assuming it gets implemented, which was part of what your question gets to you—does not address all of our security concerns with respect to—

Senator AYOTTE. But, let me ask you this.

Secretary CARTER.—Iran. And—

Senator AYOTTE. Just yes or no, should we respond to their testing of this missile, that violates existing U.N. resolutions?

Secretary CARTER. I—I'll describe one response that is in our area, and that is our continuing commitment to the development of missile defenses. That's one of the reasons why we are developing and fielding—

Senator AYOTTE. I understand that we're developing missile defenses, but what is our response when they behave badly already? Shouldn't there be a response from the United States of America? We had, recently, a panel of experts here, and I asked each of them—and they came from different perspectives—if we should respond. They all agreed, "Yes."

Secretary CARTER. Well, the—in our area of responsibility, I would say this, Senator. I'll let the—Ambassador Power and Secretary Kerry address the diplomatic side of it. But, in our area of responsibility—and I made this clear right from the beginning of the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear deal, that that does not end all of our security concerns with respect to Iran.

Senator AYOTTE. I mean—

Secretary CARTER. That is why we—

Senator AYOTTE. Mr. Secretary, I'm sorry—

Secretary CARTER.—continue to—

Senator AYOTTE.—I don't have a lot of time, but ending—it seems not ending. It seems like it's just beginning, really, as we think about this unholy alliance between Russia and Iran, undermining our interests in Syria, as we think about them testing, in our faces, this long-range missile, as we think about what the Supreme Leader has basically said, "Any sanctions, we're going to walk away from the JCPOA." I would say that it's really just beginning.

That said, before I leave—I don't have much time, but I need to ask question of you, General Dunford. I had the privilege of, recently, on Friday, going to the Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility ("Gitmo") and meeting with our men and women who serve there. They're doing an excellent job under difficult circumstances, as you know. One of the issues that was brought to my attention—and I know that you, as a leader in our military, one of your jobs, having been a commander and serving, obviously, in the highest position in our military, understand that taking care of our men and women in uniform is so critical. Yet, we have a situation down there where we met with women guards who are being prevented from fully performing their mission because the five 9/11 attackers, who are charged with killing 3,000 Americans, will not allow them to per-

form their duties because they're women. Can you tell me what you think about that and whether you think that is right, and how we should be addressing that?

General DUNFORD. Senator, I can tell you how I feel about it. I feel the same way as the Commander, U.S. Southern Command, General John Kelly, who describes it as outrageous. And I read his weekly report, and have read it for about—probably the last seven or eight weeks, to include the two or three weeks before transition. So, it's outrageous. He's identified it. And as you probably know, Senator, that's being worked by lawyers. It's an injunction. I don't—I'm not using that as an excuse, I'm just sharing with you that's actually the—where it's at right now. It's being worked by lawyers. The Commander has identified it. I think it ought to be—it is outrageous. It ought to be fixed. It hasn't been, to date.

Senator AYOTTE. I'd like to see the administration speak out against this. Here we talk about giving women more opportunity in combat, but this is a area where these women that we met with, by the way, that are serving there, they're the very best. And they are not being able to perform the full responsibilities of their positions simply because they are women, because 9/11 terrorists are manipulating the system to say that our women cannot guard them.

Secretary Carter, I hope you would agree with me that this is outrageous. And I would hope that the administration would do everything in its power to stand up for our women in the military.

Secretary CARTER. I do want to associate myself with what the Chairman said. It is outrageous. And what General Kelly said, this is the—pursuant to an action of a Federal judge, and I understand that. But, if you're—I think it is counter to the way we treat servicemembers, including women servicemembers, and outrage is a very good word for it.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, I appreciate both of you being here.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN [presiding]. Mr. Secretary and General Dunford, I've known both of you for many years, and I have appreciated very much your outstanding work. I am great admirers of both of you. I appreciate your service.

But, could I, again, caution you, Mr. Secretary. It isn't helpful to our relations and members of this committee when there's a widely spread story stating the name of the ship, where it went, how it went, and then you come and tell us that you can't confirm or deny something that is out there in the media. So, meaning that somebody has leaked all that information to the media and it's out there, but you can't tell this—members of this committee, who have the responsibility—it isn't a privilege, it's a responsibility to exercise oversight.

The second issue I want to mention to you is Guantanamo. I understand that the President has said many—on numerous occasions, that one of his objections is Guantanamo. You and the President's top aide came to my office and said you were going to give me a plan. I've always favored closing Guantanamo, for a whole variety of reasons. Yet, we still haven't got a plan from you. In fact, not only not a plan—until I asked you about it specifically, there was no communication, after coming to my office and saying that

you're going to give me that plan and I said we needed it before we marked up the defense authorization bill. We got nothing. Not an update, not a briefing on what was going on. So, we put in the language in Guantanamo, and the President then voices his strong objection to Guantanamo.

Finally, this issue of whether we are protecting those people who we are asking to fight against Bashar Assad and ISIS. Isn't it true that we've dropped munitions, General Dunford, to these—to a group of people who we are supporting in Syria?

General DUNFORD. It is true, Senator.

Chairman MCCAIN. It is true? Yet, are we going to protect them from Russian air attacks?

General DUNFORD. Senator, we have the authority, we have the capability, and we have options to defend the forces that we've—

Chairman MCCAIN. But, is it true that the Russians are already attacking them?

General DUNFORD. The ones we have trained, it—they have not.

Chairman MCCAIN. I'm not asking the ones we've trained. The ones we dropped munitions to.

General DUNFORD. No, the Russians have not attacked the ones we've dropped munitions to, Senator.

Chairman MCCAIN. They have not.

General DUNFORD. No, Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. They have not—

General DUNFORD. To make sure that you and I are speaking of the same group, the group I'm referring to is what's known as the Syrian Arab Coalition. They're operating in the northeast part of the country, north of Raqqa. We recently provided resupply to those individuals—ammunition—

Chairman MCCAIN. If they're attacked by the Russians, we'll defend them.

General DUNFORD. Senator, we have the capability to do that, and we'd provide options. I can't answer that question.

Chairman MCCAIN. They'd be interested. They'd be interested—

General DUNFORD. Yes, sir.

Chairman MCCAIN.—in knowing, I think, if we're going to give them equipment and ask them to fight, and then they're going to be—we can't answer to them whether we're going to protect them, or not. I don't think—I think it's a degree of immorality.

So, anyway, Chairman, this—

Secretary CARTER. May I—the two parts you raised, just take a moment?

First of all, again, I don't mean to be coy about the ship sailing. I know things are in the newspaper. I'm just going to tell you where I'm coming from on that. It has nothing to do with this particular operation. There are all kinds of things in the newspaper that—and it—and that should not be in the newspaper. I don't like to talk about military operations publicly. You are, of course, entitled to know everything, and be briefed on everything. But, talking about things in a public setting, I'm, in general, not—

Chairman MCCAIN. But, what—

Secretary CARTER.—not in favor of.

Chairman MCCAIN. Why shouldn't—

Secretary CARTER. So, I don't want you to think I'm being coy——

Chairman MCCAIN. But, what is——

Secretary CARTER.—or evasive. I——

Chairman MCCAIN. But, what is classified about it? What is it that you wouldn't want—I mean, it's—in fact, I think literally every member of this committee applauds it. So, I'm not sure that—what the reason is, why you wouldn't want to just state what has already been, from somebody that works for you—the name of the ship, where it went, when it went, how it went, but yet you won't tell us. That causes frustration, Mr. Secretary.

Secretary CARTER. Okay. All right. Well, I don't mean to cause you frustration. I just wanted you to know where I'm coming from.

Chairman MCCAIN. Well, I hope you understand our frustration.

Secretary CARTER. Yeah, I do. I do. But, I—and maybe my hesitation is excessive, but I don't like to talk about military operations in public. Perhaps this one should be an exception.

But, let me go on to the other thing you said, about Gitmo. I, too, favor, like you, closing Gitmo, if that is at all possible. That—because some of the detainees in Gitmo are not—cannot be safely transferred to another location, in order to close Gitmo, as you know, we would need to find a location in the United States, or locations, in which they could continue to be detained. What has taken the time, Chairman, is that we had to survey a number of sites. We've done that in a number of sites around the country. We've completed that—and we have—some of those are Department of Defense sites, some of those are Bureau of Prisons sites. We needed to have them nominated by the Justice Department and then to do the site surveys there. All of that took some time.

Chairman MCCAIN. I understand.

Secretary CARTER. The process is now complete, and I expect you'll get your proposal shortly.

Chairman MCCAIN. All right. I understand, but I would have appreciated an update. The cynicism over on this side, at the Capitol, is, to my view, somewhat justified, because the law was broken when Mr. Bowe Bergdahl was swapped for five people. The law required that the President of the United States notify the Congress of the United States. He didn't do it, so, frankly, there's a credibility gap that is huge, when the President acts in direct violation of the law, and using the excuse, well, he was afraid there was going to be a leak. Well, to me, that's not sufficient reason to violate the law, and so, therefore, the cynicism here is immense. To expect—the President complains about the NDAA—to expect that this committee would act, after the President has violated the law and there is no plan, is, of course, something that is not—neither reasonable nor in keeping with our responsibilities.

Could I say, again, of my respect. I appreciate the great work that both of you do. As I've said, we've known each other a long time. But, I also have to tell you, there's a certain amount of frustration here because of the lack of communication. What we just talked about, of Guantanamo, is one. Another one is this policy, or lack of policy, about what people we train and equip, and whether we're going to defend them, or not. The lack of a strategy to say that we can—have to take out Syrian air defenses in order to es-

establish a no-fly zone is simply not true. You can ask—I'll ask any military expert. That's not true. You don't have to take out Syrian air defenses. It's Syrians that can't fly into our places. We've had military's—members like General Petraeus and General Keane and many others who obviously have a very different view of the whole issue of what we're going to do, which, by doing nothing, has triggered a flood of millions of refugees, which is a problem we're going to be grappling with for many years to come. It didn't have to happen.

Well, I look forward to more conversations with you. I appreciate you coming to the committee, I appreciate your service.

This hearing, I'm sure you'll be glad to know, is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:00 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN

MILITARY STRATEGY TO SUPPORT POLITICAL OBJECTIVES

1. Senator MCCAIN. Our military efforts are directed at degrading and defeating ISIL but seem to ignore Russia, Assad, Iran and Al Qaeda. If we successfully defeat ISIL, but Al Nusrah, Assad, and Russia remain untouched or grow stronger, how does the resulting situation on the ground in Syria favor the interests of the United States?

SECRETARY CARTER. The United States' military efforts in Syria are aimed at defeating the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and countering other threats to the United States, including the al-Qa'ida aligned Khorasan Group. Even with ISIL defeated, the Department of Defense recognizes that the situation on the ground in Syria would remain extremely complicated. The Administration is working to build broad international support that will help to avoid the risk of creating a power vacuum in Syria, an outcome that would not be in the interests of the United States. To this end, the Defense Department is complementing counter-ISIL activities with diplomatic efforts to end the conflict in Syria—a political solution with buy-in from all parties is the best way to avoid this dynamic. The State Department has engaged diplomatically and has strongly supported the Vienna talks, which are aimed at organizing a cease-fire, establishing a political transition process, and resolving the Syrian conflict peacefully.

2. Senator MCCAIN. What is your understanding of the political end state in Syria that our military efforts are designed to help achieve and what specific military conditions on the ground are you trying to create using military means that will support the "political solution" desired by the United States?

Secretary CARTER. The military efforts in Syria are aimed at degrading and defeating the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and countering other terrorist threats to the United States, including from the al-Qa'ida-aligned Khorasan Group. ISIL must be degraded, dismantled, and ultimately defeated to protect the United States from terror attacks, and to set conditions for stability in the region. These military efforts complement the Administration's other efforts to resolve the conflict in Syria through political negotiations. To that end, Secretary Kerry has intensified diplomatic efforts to reach a political resolution to the conflict in Syria, including making progress last month in Vienna, where major stake-holders in Syria agreed to a set of basic principles on resolving the conflict.

General DUNFORD. The political end state in Syria that our military efforts are designed to achieve has four aspects: 1) the defeat of ISIL, 2) resolution of the Syrian civil war, 3) the peaceful transition of the Assad regime, and 4) an end to the commiserate humanitarian crisis.

The specific military conditions on the ground that we are trying to create towards this are: 1) eventually seizing the ISIL stronghold of Raqqa, 2) cutting ISIL's supply lines, 3) degrading its finances, 4) killing its leaders, and 5) taking back the territory ISIL now holds.

DETERMINING VICTORY

3. Senator MCCAIN. Beyond tallying up numbers of targets destroyed and senior leaders or ISIL fighters eliminated, what specific measures are you using to gauge your success against your objective to degrade and destroy ISIL?

General DUNFORD. In accordance with the 2014 U.S. Government Strategy to Counter ISIL, we are utilizing comprehensive military coalition campaign assessments to measure progress against military objectives nested within the broader U.S. Government and coalition strategy to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL. Measures of success include but are not limited to: Defending the homeland by preventing and disrupting ISIL's ability to plan and conduct external operations; Removing experienced and capable leadership; Dismantling ISIL's military capabilities and command and control infrastructure; Denying safehaven by reducing terrain held or controlled by ISIL; and Developing the capability and capacity of partners who can effectively engage ISIL across Syria, Iraq, and wherever they emerge.

CENTCOM assesses incremental gains in each of these measures and several recent developments highlight Coalition progress. These include:

- The recent success of Iraqi forces in operations to retake and hold Ramadi;
- Coalition successes in targeting the oil infrastructure that ISIL relies upon to fund operations;
- The success of ongoing efforts to isolate the key population centers of Mosul and Raqqa; and
- Removal of ISIL key leadership from the battlefield in Iraq and Syria.

We are now pressuring ISIL in Iraq and Syria on more fronts than at any other point in the campaign, and without question, ISIL is feeling the effects of those efforts. We will continue to reinforce success in Iraq and Syria while aggressively looking for opportunities to adjust the trajectory of the campaign as the region's geopolitical landscape evolves.

4. Senator MCCAIN. How will you know when you have achieved your objective? How will you know when we have "won"?

Secretary CARTER. The Department is committed to degrading and ultimately defeating Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which poses a direct threat to the United States, to our regional partners, and to our European allies. The objective in Iraq and Syria will be achieved when ISIL's ability to conduct external attacks is precluded and when local ground forces, supported by coalition air strikes and advice, have eliminated ISIL's territorial possessions and its capacity to destabilize our partners and allies. The objective in Iraq and Syria will be accomplished through a variety of efforts, such as debilitating ISIL's freedom of movement, destroying ISIL's command and control structure, and undermining its ability to govern. The overarching objective is to create conditions that prevent ISIL or other similar terrorist organizations from taking advantage of ungoverned spaces and vulnerable, disenfranchised populations in order to threaten the United States and our allies and partners.

General DUNFORD. We win when ISIL no longer poses a threat to the U.S., our allies, and our partner nations. We accomplish this as a coalition by denying ISIL safe haven from which to plan and coordinate external attacks, degrading ISIL command and control by removing key leaders from the battlefield, and dismantling the facilitation networks that allow ISIL to fund operations and move resources freely in Iraq, Syria, and beyond.

While intensifying our efforts against ISIL in Syria and Iraq, we must also aggressively counter ISIL wherever and whenever they emerge. ISIL is a transregional threat, and requires a transregional approach.

AIR EXCLUSION ZONE

5. Senator MCCAIN. Do you consider the indiscriminate use of barrel bombs by Assad against civilians an outrageous atrocity and morally repugnant? Is it a violation of the laws of armed conflict?

Secretary CARTER. The Syrian government's indiscriminate use of barrel bombs against civilians is certainly an outrageous atrocity, is morally repugnant, and is taking a terrible toll on the Syrian people.

I condemn any intentional targeting of civilians by a party to an armed conflict or indiscriminate use of weapons, including bombs, to kill civilians. Although the specific facts of any particular case would have to be examined, intentionally targeting the peaceful civilian population and indiscriminately using weapons, including bombs, to kill peaceful civilians would violate the law of war.

General DUNFORD. Yes; the intentional or indiscriminate use of any weapon against civilians who are not a part of an organized armed group or otherwise taking a direct part in hostilities is morally repugnant and should be condemned as a violation of the law of war.

The law of war principle of humanity forbids the infliction of suffering, injury, or destruction unnecessary to accomplish a legitimate military purpose. The related principle of distinction requires parties to a conflict to distinguish between enemy combatants and civilians, including when conducting attacks against enemy combatants and other military objectives. The use of barrel bombs by any party to an armed conflict to deliberately target civilians challenges both of these principles, as does the indiscriminate use of such munitions in populated areas.

6. Senator MCCAIN. From a capabilities perspective: if you were tasked by the President, upon determination that a barrel bomb attack by Assad against civilians had taken place, to target and destroy a portion of the aircraft at the Syrian military airfield nearest to the site of the barrel bomb attack, do our military forces have the capability to do that?

General DUNFORD. Yes, we have the capability in theater to respond and strike targets precisely. Accordingly, if the President tasked us to do so, we could target and destroy a portion of the aircraft at the Syrian military airfield nearest to the site of a barrel bomb attack.

7. Senator MCCAIN. If barrel bombs against Syrian civilians stop, would you expect the flow of refugees to increase or decrease?

Secretary CARTER. Ceasing the Syrian government's barrel bombing of civilians could be a very important step in lessening the terrible toll this conflict is taking on the Syrian people.

It is unclear, however, what effect stopping the barrel bombing of civilians would have on the flow of refugees. The majority of civilian deaths in the Syrian conflict are the result of artillery fire, not barrel bombs. Ending barrel bombing would be just one step in improving security conditions sufficiently to be able to address the Syria refugee situation.

General DUNFORD. I would expect a halt in barrel bombing of civilians would decrease refugee flow, but not stop it. Barrel bombing is only one of many factors threatening civilians. Assad's ground forces, Russia's indiscriminate air attacks, and ISIL are additional factors.

8. Senator MCCAIN. Do the U.S. Armed Forces possess the capability and capacity to establish and enforce a limited air exclusion zone on the border—such as the area that is approximately 60 miles by 40 miles between the Euphrates river and the area north of Aleppo—to provide some degree of protection to the moderate opposition against barrel bombs and Assad regime strikes as well as facilitating the flow of humanitarian assistance?

General DUNFORD. The U.S. Armed Forces possess the capability and capacity to establish an air exclusion zone—a “no-fly” zone—in Syria. An air exclusion zone would protect people on the ground below the zone from airborne attacks such as barrel bombs or other air-to-surface ordnance. Such an exclusion zone; however, would not deny surface-to-surface ordnance. As a result, we could not protect people within an air exclusion zone from attacks originating on the surface. Moreover, humanitarian assistance delivery is dependent upon protection from air and surface attack; therefore, an air exclusion zone would not facilitate humanitarian assistance flow without additional forces.

RUSSIA IN SYRIA

9. Senator MCCAIN. Is the bombing by Russia of the moderate opposition making them more or less capable and likely of fighting ISIL and is it making them more or less likely to join forces with extremists?

General DUNFORD. Russian bombing of moderate opposition forces makes them less capable of fighting ISIL. The bombing of moderate opposition forces results in higher casualties, equipment losses, and interruption of planned operations.

10. Senator MCCAIN. In your opinion, where do Russian military objectives in Syria conflict with our national security interests? What military efforts, if any, are being undertaken to impose costs on the Russians for actions in Syria that run counter to U.S. interests?

Secretary CARTER. Russian military objectives in Syria conflict with U.S. national security interests where their actions do not match their stated intent to combat

ISIL or emphasize solely the defense of Bashar al-Assad. Russia continues to support the Assad regime by conducting indiscriminate strikes that impact moderate Syrian opposition groups and cause casualties among Syrian civilians. Russia's actions make it more difficult to achieve a successful political transition. A political transition will require the participation of the moderate opposition forces Moscow is attacking. Consequently, the U.S. will not cooperate in efforts that undermine a constructive political transition.

As previously stated before this committee, the Assad regime bears overwhelming responsibility for the crisis in Syria, which has destabilized the region by displacing more than 12 million people both within Syria and as refugees abroad. This regional destabilization clearly runs counter to not only U.S. national security interests, but the interests of all the coalition's members.

The Department of Defense maintains a policy of no military to military cooperation with Russia and continues to support United States sanctions in response to its aggressive actions in Ukraine. In this context, cooperation in Syria that ignores Russian activities elsewhere would only embolden further pursuit of a losing bet to support the Assad regime. The United States will not let Russia determine our strategy nor cooperate in efforts that run counter United States interests. The Department has an agreement with Russia on air safety procedures that solely establish technical protocols to ensure the safety of our pilots and our coalition. This does not constitute coordination or collaboration with Russia.

11. Senator MCCAIN. The lack of any meaningful assistance to Ukraine allowed Putin to dictate the terms of the frozen conflict in Ukraine and then pivot to Syria. Secretary Carter, if we provide meaningful military assistance to Ukraine, would Putin have to rethink what he is doing in Syria?

Secretary CARTER. The Department has provided substantial security assistance to Ukraine, which has been calibrated towards supporting a diplomatic solution to the crisis. While not providing lethal assistance, the Department has committed more than \$265 million in equipment and training since the beginning of the crisis to help Ukraine better monitor and secure its border, operate more safely and effectively, and preserve and enforce its territorial integrity.

Russia appears to be pursuing public messaging, both domestically and internationally, to paint activities in Syria as part of a rapprochement with the West. These Russian efforts do seem to be motivated in part to counter isolation resulting from broad international condemnation of their activities in and around Ukraine. Russia's actions in Syria will not take away from my strong condemnation of Russian actions in Ukraine, nor change sanctions and security support in response to those destabilizing actions. The Department views these conflicts as unrelated to the extent that specific actions on our part in one theater would change Russia's calculus in another. Russian presence in Syria does not change the United States objectives in the region, nor will it diminish the United States commitment to provide robust security assistance to Ukraine.

Russia has not refrained from taking definitive steps to further its national interests outside its immediate periphery region. I welcome the contributions of Congress in supporting a strong North Atlantic Treaty Organization Alliance through the European Reassurance Initiative and other efforts that assure allies and partners. Such efforts form a robust deterrent to Russian activity in and around Ukraine, as well as aggressive intervention by Russia in other theaters of operations.

SYRIA TRAIN AND EQUIP PROGRAM

12. Senator MCCAIN. If the Syria Train and Equip program included allowing the moderate opposition to go after the Assad regime, would it be more or less successful at recruiting moderate opposition fighters?

General DUNFORD. Under current policy, ISIL is our military adversary in Syria. The Train and Equip program was specifically designed to find, vet, and train moderate opposition fighters to oppose ISIL. If U.S. policy were to change to support opposition to the regime, I believe the number of moderate opposition fighters available for a train and equip program would increase.

13. Senator MCCAIN. The Pentagon announced at the end of September that certain portions of the Syria Train and Equip program were on 'pause'. Before the program, a coalition effort, was put on pause, were Turkey and Jordan consulted and if so what were their inputs? If not, how would you characterize their reaction to the pause?

Secretary CARTER. The United States has been clear in communications with the Coalition partners about the changes made to the Syria Train and Equip Program.

Many Coalition partners continue to assist the efforts to enable local ground forces to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria. I thank those Coalition partners who have supported counter-ISIL efforts thus far, and the Department will continue to work with them on ways to broaden and deepen cooperation.

14. Senator MCCAIN. Are fighters that were trained under the Syria Train and Equip program making a difference on the battlefield, if so in what ways?

General DUNFORD. Yes, the New Syrian Forces (NSF) that were trained under the Syria Train and Equip program are making a difference on the battlefield principally by serving as forward observers to identify ISIL targets for the Coalition. Since the NSF were reinserted into Syria, they have facilitated approximately 100 strikes against ISIL. In addition, the NSF have: (1) conducted raids that destroyed ISIL forces and infrastructure; (2) contributed to stabilizing the defensive lines of moderate opposition forces in northern Syria; and (3) contributed to the liberation of ISIL controlled areas and towns.

15. Senator MCCAIN. How long do you assess the Syria Train and Equip program can remain on pause before the option to restart no longer exists?

Secretary CARTER. Only the training portion of the Train and Equip program has been paused. The Department continues to work with vetted leaders of groups that are actively fighting ISIL, and is providing equipment and limited air support for their operations. The New Syrian Forces currently fighting in Syria have been a valuable asset in the efforts to degrade and defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). I could recommend restarting training in the future if and when doing so would add strategic momentum to the counter ISIL fight. This approach builds on successes that local Syrian forces have achieved along Syria's northern border to retake and hold ground from ISIL with the help of United States airstrikes. The Department is maintaining the training sites in a "warm status" for if and when it would make sense to train vetted elements of the Syrian opposition. There is not a specific timeline under which this option will disappear.

16. Senator MCCAIN. Prior to the 'pause', who made the decisions about when to insert trained fighters of the Syrian moderate opposition back into Syria after training was complete and who made the decisions on whether or not to resupply and support the fighters we have trained while they are on the battlefield?

Secretary CARTER. In consultation with leaders at U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and other locations, the Combined Joint Interagency Task Force—Syria Director recommended when to insert fighters trained by the Coalition into Syria and whether to resupply the groups trained. The concept of operation, as presented by CENTCOM through the Department of Defense, was ultimately approved by the National Security Council. These decisions were made using the best available assessment of the situation on the ground in the area where these groups were inserted and were fighting.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JAMES INHOFE

MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY

17. Senator INHOFE. In your opinions, are we seeing the collapse of the Middle East's geopolitical framework? Why or why not?

Secretary CARTER. The Middle East is in a period of major change as the region continues to evolve and adjust to new political and social realities following the 2011 "Arab Spring." In addition, Iran's malign influence, the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and increased sectarian tensions challenge the stability of the region in different ways. The Administration remains committed to advancing the United States' enduring interests in this complex region. These include preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, maintaining the free flow of energy and commerce, countering terrorism, and ensuring the safety and security of U.S. partners. The U.S. will continue to maintain steadfast partnerships with key allies and partners in the pursuit of a more stable and secure region to protect those interests.

General DUNFORD. The geopolitical framework of the Middle East remains as complex as it has ever been, and there are stresses on several nation-states. However, we are not seeing "collapse" but rather continued tensions. Alliances, coalitions, and partnerships are working to address these tensions. The more stable states in the region, such as the GCC states, Jordan, and Egypt, are buttressing

their less stable neighbors. The exception is Iran, which is fomenting discord as it continues to export its revolution.

18. Senator INHOFE. Has the lack of steadfast American leadership in the Middle East created a vacuum for which Russia is exploiting as an anti-US influence campaign?

Secretary CARTER. No. Unlike Russia, the United States is at the core of leading international efforts to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL, which poses a direct threat to the United States and its allies and partners. The United States is also supporting a moderate Syrian opposition that is essential for reaching a political resolution to the current conflict. The U.S. will continue to be the single largest donor in addressing the humanitarian disaster in Syria and beyond its borders. Unlike Russia, the United States is joined by a coalition of some 65 partners in these efforts.

Instead of assuming a leadership role, Russia is isolating itself from the large majority of the countries in the region, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, Jordan, and others. Russia's aims in the Middle East likely go beyond its publicly stated goals in Syria. Russia is probably involved in the Middle East because it wants to be viewed as a security guarantor for regimes it favors in the region and wants to demonstrate that it is a key player in international affairs. I believe the Russian strategy is fundamentally flawed, and Russia's actions, including devoting strikes overwhelmingly to non-Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) targets in Syria, cast doubt on Russia's seriousness about reaching a political solution to the conflict.

General DUNFORD. No. I assess Russian presence to be principally driven by a desire to support the Assad regime. Despite its public rhetoric, countering ISIL is not a principal concern of Russian forces.

Since Secretary Carter briefed this committee in July on the counter-ISIL strategy:

- Afghanistan's instability has forced the administration to maintain a 9,800 troop presence through 2016.
- We continue high risk operations in Iraq; illustrated in the recent loss of an American hero from Roland, Oklahoma, Master Sergeant Joshua Wheeler, who by his actions saved the lives of 70 hostages and fellow members of a coalition task force.
- ISIL still controls much of northern and western Iraq despite more than a year of United States airstrikes and the loss of Ramadi was a significant setback.
- Russia continued its military buildup in Syria and began operations to support Assad.
- Iran Quds Forces in Syria have been joined by Iranian supported forces from Lebanon's Hezbollah to support the Assad regime, all under the command of General Soleimani, who previously directed attacks on United States forces in Iraq.
- The Administration scraped its \$500 million Syrian rebel train-and-equip program.
- And we are now seeing the greatest refugee crisis since WWII out of Syria.

19. Senator INHOFE. What impact do these recent developments and activities across Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and Syria have the "nine lines of effort"? (DOD has lead on #2 and #3: deny ISIL safe haven and build partner capacity in Iraq and Syria)?

Secretary CARTER. The United States continues to have the right strategy to degrade and ultimately defeat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). As you note, the Department is the lead on two of the nine lines of effort—denying ISIL safe haven and building partner capacity in Iraq and Syria. The approach is to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL by working through local partners to enable their success on the ground while degrading ISIL through the air. The coalition's efforts have made some progress in Iraq and Syria over the past several months. For example, in Syria, with United States help, including 79 airstrikes, a coalition of Syrian Arabs and Kurds recaptured important terrain by pushing ISIL out of the town of Al Hawl and 800 square miles of surrounding territory in November. In Iraq, supported by coalition airstrikes, Iraqi Security Forces retook Tikrit; and United States airstrikes have enabled other Iraqi-led operations within Iraq. While the nine lines of effort remain valid, I constantly review our progress in each and adapt the strategy. As I have said publically, it is essential for all nine lines of effort to remain synchronized and I am continuously seeking ways to improve inter-agency coordination. I acknowledge that the U.S. faces serious challenges and I anticipate this will be a multi-year effort.

20. Senator INHOFE. The Assad regime is being directly supported by Russia, Iran and Cuba. Does this mean the U.S. will have to accept the fact that the Assad regime is there to stay?

Secretary CARTER. As the Administration has stated previously, the conflict in Syria will not end until Assad is gone, as he has lost legitimacy to govern Syria. To that end, Secretary Kerry has intensified diplomatic efforts for a political resolution, and the Administration made progress last month in Vienna in moving the major stake-holders in Syria toward agreement on a set of basic principles to resolve the conflict.

Russia and Iran's decision to intervene militarily in Syria was a poor one. Russia and Iran are making themselves targets for violent extremists, and their efforts to prop up the Syrian government will further fuel the conflict.

21. Senator INHOFE. Have United States airstrikes declined in Syria since Russia has initiated military operations?

Secretary CARTER. The Coalition has not altered its operations in Syria due to Russia's ill-conceived intervention. Separately, weather over Syria has at times restricted the Coalition's ability to confirm targets before striking, limiting our ability to ensure our strikes are precise enough to reduce the risk of collateral damage and civilian casualties. There was also a decline in sorties in Iraq during this time period, where Russian aircraft are not operating, due to the same weather system. Although limited at times, during this time period, the Coalition's strikes against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have increased impact on the battlefield. During one particular offensive in Syria, a coalition of Syrian Arabs and Kurds, assisted by United States airstrikes, recaptured important terrain from ISIL, pushing ISIL out of the town of Al Hawl and 800 square miles of surrounding territory. Along the Mara line in northwest Syria, Coalition strikes have recently enabled moderate Syrian forces—including forces trained and equipped by the Department of Defense—to recapture two towns from ISIL. In addition to limiting the group's freedom of movement, the strikes are systematically targeting the ISIL oil network and striking critical oil infrastructure—destroying 100's of tankers—and degrading the group's ability to fund militant operations.

22. Senator INHOFE. Can the flow of refugees be stopped without addressing both the Assad regime and ISIL operations in Syria?

Secretary CARTER. Failure to address the impact of both the Syrian government and the Islamic State in the Iraq and the Levant's (ISIL) brutal attacks on the Syrian population will only lead to further fighting in Syria and to an increase in Syrian refugees. To that end, the Coalition is pushing ISIL out of territory in Iraq and Syria through a combination of air strikes and support to ground partners. Because of these efforts, ISIL can no longer operate freely in approximately 20 to 25 percent of populated areas in Iraq and Syria that it previously controlled. Secretary Kerry has also intensified diplomatic efforts for a political resolution to the Syrian conflict, resulting in progress last month in Vienna, where major stake-holders in Syria agreed to a set of basic principles on resolving the conflict. To address the immediate needs of displaced Syrians, the Department of Defense, with Congressional support, is providing approximately \$115 million in humanitarian assistance. This assistance addresses life-saving needs in the categories of shelter, health and sanitation, and water for Syrian refugees and other displaced persons in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, and Syria.

IRAN

- This administration's strategy, or more specifically a lack of across the Middle East created a power vacuum in Iraq, allowing the rapid expansion of ISIL as well as the growth of Iranian influence in Iraq and across the region.
- Iran Quds Forces in Syria have been joined by Iranian supported forces from Lebanon's Hezbollah to support the Assad regime, all under the command of General Soleimani, who previously directed attacks on United States forces in Iraq.
- They are working with the Russian and Syrians to take back territory from Western-backed rebels fighting against Assad.
- On 11 Oct, in violation of a 2010 U.N. Security Resolution, Iran tested an inter-continental ballistic missile, which could one day carry a nuclear weapon.

23. Senator INHOFE. How do these actions impact regional stability and United States national security interests in the Middle East?

Secretary CARTER. Iran's actions as described above impact regional stability and United States national security interests in the Middle East by prolonging the Syrian civil war, fueling sectarian tension in the region, and increasing the concerns of U.S. regional partners. Iran has never tested an intercontinental ballistic missile; however, its October 10 test of a medium-range ballistic missile, called "the Emad," violated United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929, which prohibits Iran from testing missiles inherently capable of delivering a nuclear weapon. In response to the October 10 test, the United States, in conjunction with France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, submitted a joint report to the United Nations Security Council for appropriate action. More broadly, the United States continues to address the totality of threats posed by Iran to United States interests and to regional stability in a myriad of ways, including through the Department of Defense's theater security cooperation plans. One key area of focus in these plans is the United States' effort to strengthen, integrate, and modernize the ballistic missile defense capabilities and capacities of partners in the region.

General DUNFORD. Iran's malign activities threaten the internal security of Iran's neighbors. Iranian support to the Assad regime and terrorist groups on the battlefields of Syria has helped to prolong that conflict. Iran's influence in Iraq diminishes Baghdad's control over its security forces and weakens its effectiveness in prosecuting the C-ISIL campaign.

Iran's continued violations of UNSCRs challenge the global nonproliferation institutions that are working to reduce ballistic missile threats, and Iran's increasingly-capable ballistic missile inventory threatens its neighbors.

24. Senator INHOFF. Are you concerned about Iran's continued ballistic missile development and support to terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas?

Secretary CARTER. I continue to be gravely concerned about Iran's ballistic missile program and its support to terrorist organizations. For decades, the Department of Defense (DOD) has prioritized monitoring and responding to the totality of threats posed by Iran to United States interests in the Middle East. Iran's missile development and support to terrorist organizations are not new phenomena. DOD will continue posturing forces in the Middle East to deter Iranian aggression and will continue to strengthen, modernize, and integrate the capabilities and capacities of U.S. partners in the region to reduce Iran's ability to coerce them militarily, including strengthening our partners capabilities and capacities. Moreover, DOD will continue to counter and deter Iranian destabilizing activities through military partnerships, force posture, preparations, and plans.

General DUNFORD. Yes. Iran's continued violations of UNSCRs related to ballistic missiles undermine the global non-proliferation institutions that are working to reduce ballistic missile threats. Iran's increasingly-capable ballistic missile inventory threatens its neighbors.

I am concerned about Iran's support to terrorist organizations. Iran's malign activities in support of Hezbollah have bolstered Hezbollah's capabilities. Iranian support to Hezbollah has prolonged the conflict in Syria, where Hezbollah fighters fight alongside the Assad Regime. Iran's support of Hezbollah's malign activities threatens other countries where Hezbollah maintains a presence.

In Gaza, Iran's renewed support of Hamas increases the volatility of an already tense situation.

25. Senator INHOFF. How do these actions impact DOD's efforts in the region?

Secretary CARTER. For decades, the Department of Defense (DOD) has prioritized monitoring and responding to the totality of threats posed by Iran to United States interests in the Middle East. Iran's October 10 test of a medium-range ballistic missile, and its support for the Lebanese Hezbollah and brutal regime of Syrian dictator Bashar al Assad are, unfortunately, not new phenomena. DOD will continue posturing forces in the Middle East to deter Iranian aggression and will continue to strengthen, modernize, and integrate the capabilities and capacities of United States partners in the region to reduce Iran's ability to coerce them militarily, including in the area of ballistic missile defenses.

General DUNFORD. Addressed in QFR 23. Please see response to QFR 23.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ROGER WICKER

MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY

Secretary Carter and General Dunford, thanks for joining us this morning.

Chairman McCain called this hearing to discuss our strategy in the Middle East. As General Petraeus told our committee on September 22, “The Middle East is not a part of the world that plays by Las Vegas rules: What happens in the Middle East is not going to stay in the Middle East.”

Our strategy should be bold and comprehensive. Our lack of early decisiveness on Syria left a power vacuum that is now being exploited by the Russians, a country General Dunford said this summer is the greatest threat to United States national security. The stakes are high and we cannot afford to take anymore half-measures against ISIS and Assad.

General Petraeus told our committee that “If there is to be any hope of a political settlement [in Syria], a certain military and security context is required . . . We and our partners need to facilitate it—and over the past four years, we have not done so.”

26. Senator WICKER. What do you believe is the appropriate United States military role to create the military and security context in Syria that General Petraeus refers to?

Secretary CARTER. The Department’s efforts in Syria are aimed at degrading and defeating ISIL. These efforts complement diplomatic efforts to achieve a political transition in Syria. There is however no military solution to the conflict itself. To that end, Secretary Kerry has intensified diplomatic efforts for a political resolution, with recent progress in Vienna, where the major stake-holders in Syria agreed to a set of basic principles to resolve the conflict.

Degrading and defeating ISIL is in the United States’ interest and a key part of our broader strategy in Syria. To accelerate these efforts against ISIL, the Department is enhancing its current campaign by deploying a limited number of Special Operations Forces to Syria to assist counter-ISIL forces, adding additional United States enablers in support of Iraqi ground forces and increasing support to neighboring countries, such as Jordan. The Department has also ramped up pressure on ISIL by providing support to additional ground forces in Syria, such as the Syrian Arab Coalition, and increasing air strike capabilities by deploying additional assets to Incirlik Air Base in Turkey.

Russia’s strategy, on the other hand, is fundamentally flawed. It is clear that Russia is devoting its strikes overwhelmingly to non-ISIL targets in Syria, casting doubt on Moscow’s seriousness about reaching a political solution and contradicting its publically and privately stated justifications for its military intervention. Moreover, by its actions, Russia is making itself a target for violent extremists in Syria, from within Russia, and from other parts of the world. Instead of assuming a leadership role, Russia is isolating itself from the large majority of the countries in the region—including Turkey; Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States; Jordan, and others.

General DUNFORD. The United States military role in the Syrian conflict is to lead and maintain the Coalition to counter ISIL, help create conditions on the ground that will end the Syrian conflict, and support the peaceful political transition of Assad from power.

United States leadership and military effort in the Middle East far outmatches the relatively small level of Russian involvement in Syria, which continues to be directed against Syrian opposition forces rather than ISIL.

Chairman McCain has repeatedly referenced the terror and carnage caused by Assad’s barrel bombs that are deployed by Syrian aircraft. It’s the barrel bombs and air attacks that are causing most of the civilian casualties in Syria—not ISIS.

Chairman McCain has repeatedly referenced the terror and carnage caused by Assad’s barrel bombs that are deployed by Syrian aircraft. It’s the barrel bombs and air attacks that are causing most of the civilian casualties in Syria—not ISIS.

27. Senator WICKER. Do you agree with General Petraeus that we have the capability to take out Assad’s air force? How does the presence of Russian boots on the ground impact that option?

General DUNFORD. Yes, I agree with General Petraeus that the U.S. military has the capability to destroy Assad’s air force. Attacking Assad’s air forces would likely result in both Syrian regime and Russian casualties, as Russian forces and aircraft are intermingled with those of the Assad regime, both on the ground and in the air. Sophisticated Russian air defenses also complicate any such mission. Such an effort would increase the possibility of miscalculation and unintended conflict with Russia, would complicate the situation on the ground, and could put the solidarity of the Coalition at risk.

28. Senator WICKER. Do you believe the U.S. has the capability to establish and enforce a no-fly zones over vulnerable Syrian populations? How does the presence of Russian boots on the ground impact that option?

General DUNFORD. Yes, I believe the United States has the capability to establish and enforce no-fly zones over vulnerable Syrian populations that would protect people on the ground below from airborne attacks. However, no-fly zones would not deny surface-to-surface ordnance, so we could not protect those people from attacks originating on the surface, such as artillery attacks and ground-based assaults. The Syrian regime would likely oppose the establishment of no-fly zones as a violation of their territorial sovereignty. This opposition in turn could cause a major regional conflict that would ultimately exacerbate the plight of vulnerable Syrian populations. The presence of Russians on the ground, operating in support of the Syrian regime, amplifies the complexity and uncertainty in the region and further increases the risk of a major regional conflict in Syria.

NDA

29. Senator WICKER. Is it correct that military construction funding—funding for security upgrades, troop housing, and other military facilities—must be both authorized and appropriated?

Secretary CARTER. Yes, it is correct that military construction funding must be both authorized and appropriated.

30. Senator WICKER. Since that is the case, would you want to take this opportunity before our committee to revise your prior statements that the Defense Authorization Bill is unimportant and “just a policy bill”?

Secretary CARTER. The Defense Authorization Bill is important legislation for the national security of the United States. The Department needs a Defense Authorization Bill that will provide a stable, multi-year budget for sound defense planning. Budget stability beyond the 1-year horizon and adequately authorized funding are necessary for the Department to make optimal use of its resources. The Department also needs a Defense Authorization Bill that will enable detainee policies, provide authority for reforms of force structure, and modernize military healthcare.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KELLY AYOTTE

TEHRAN’S BALLISTIC MISSILE TEST

31. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Carter, what is the administration going to do about Iran’s October 10th ballistic missile test that violated U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929?

Secretary CARTER. On October 21, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany submitted a joint report to the United Nations (UN) Iran Sanctions Committee on Iran’s October 10 medium-range ballistic missile launch. The report stated that the launch was a violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1929 prohibiting missile launches inherently capable of delivering a nuclear warhead and requested that the UN Panel of Experts review the report and take appropriate action. The Administration will continue to urge the Security Council to respond effectively to any future violations of UN Security Council resolutions.

32. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Carter, what specific steps does the administration plan to take in order to respond to Iran’s ballistic missile test and the U.N. Security Council resolution violation?

Secretary CARTER. On October 21, the United States, along with the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, submitted a joint report to the United Nations (UN) Iran Sanctions Committee on Iran’s October 10, 2015, medium-range ballistic missile launch. The report stated that the launch was a violation of UN Security Council Resolution 1929, which prohibits missile launches inherently capable of delivering a nuclear warhead, and requested that the UN Panel of Experts review the report and take appropriate action. In addition, the United States will continue to: work with the more than 100 countries that have endorsed the Proliferation Security Initiative to help limit Iranian missile-related imports or exports; urge all countries to implement and enforce missile-related exports consistent with Missile Technology Control Regime standards; and impose penalties when warranted under United States domestic authorities on any additional Iranian entities involved in such missile tests. Finally, the United States will continue to sustain its missile defense capabilities in the region and bolster the capabilities of allies and partners.

33. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Carter and General Dunford, what specific steps are being taken to better protect United States military personnel in the region from a ballistic missile attack from Iran?

Secretary CARTER. At the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Camp David Summit earlier this year, President Obama re-affirmed our commitment to missile defense in the Gulf region. We have taken a number of specific steps: First, we have created a robust regional U.S. missile defense architecture consisting of ballistic missile intercept, early warning, and command and control infrastructures. Second, the United States has worked bilaterally with GCC-member States to build up their own capacity for self-defense, complementing the U.S. capabilities already in the region. The United States is also working in conjunction with these bilateral efforts to aid the GCC as a whole in building an interoperable multilateral regional defense system. Finally, the United States intends to preserve a strong force posture in the Middle East, which will include United States missile defense capabilities, to protect key resources and augment the range of bilateral and multilateral initiatives we continue to pursue. In total, these efforts will increase efficiency and effectiveness of limited individual resources through expanding the capability as a whole to defend the region against the Iranian ballistic missile threat.

General DUNFORD. The department takes the Iranian ballistic missile threat to United States military personnel very seriously. To counter this threat, we've forward deployed AN/TPY-2 radars, Patriot Air Defense Systems, and Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense-capable ships throughout the CENTCOM and EUCOM regions. We have deliberately chosen a forward defense posture, and thus, these systems are deployed to the maximum extent of their sustainability. In Europe, the first Aegis Ashore site will soon be active as part of the European Phased Adaptive Approach Phase 2. This site will not only provide defense to U.S. military personnel in Europe, but will also provide the U.S. contribution to NATO Ballistic Missile Defense. We will soon start work on building the second Aegis Ashore site in Poland. Finally, we are working to upgrade our early warning system in both theaters, and are increasing passive defense measures to minimize the impact of an attack in CENTCOM.

34. Senator AYOTTE. General Dunford, what specific additional steps are we taking to work with Israel to improve their ability to defend against Iranian ballistic missiles?

General DUNFORD. The United States and Israel jointly developed the Arrow Weapon System (AWS), which provides Israel with the capability to defend itself against imminent and emerging ballistic missile threats, while providing the United States with critical data and technology for its missile defense programs.

Overall, ballistic missile defense cooperation constitutes our most robust bilateral effort to bolster Israel's defense. In recent years, the U.S. has provided over \$3 billion in addition to annual FMF to help develop intercept systems such as the Iron Dome for short-range rockets, the David's Sling for medium range missiles, and the AWS for ballistic missiles.

35. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Carter, if there are no consequences for Iran's most recent violation—which is clearly designed to test U.S. resolve and see what they can get away with—won't that simply exacerbate this consistent Iranian willingness to ignore its obligations and flout international law?

Secretary CARTER. Iran's October 10, 2015, test of the "Emad" Medium Range Ballistic Missile constituted a violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929. The United States views this as a serious matter. There will be consequences for this violation. The United States has already raised this issue at the United Nations (UN) Security Council. Together with the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, the United States has asked the UN Security Council's Iran Sanctions Committee to review the matter and recommend appropriate action. The United States will continue to press the UN Security Council to respond to any and all future Iranian violations of UN Security Council resolutions. Furthermore, the United States will continue to support the full range of unilateral and multilateral tools available—including the Missile Technology Control Regime, Proliferation Security Initiative, and a variety of United States domestic authorities—to counter Iran's missile program.

NEED FOR LONG-TERM LAW OF WAR DETENTION AND INTERROGATION FACILITY

36. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Carter, will United States interrogators have access to the five ISIS terrorists detained in the October 22 joint Iraqi Peshmerga and United States raid.

Secretary CARTER. United States Special Operations Forces have a well-established relationship with the Iraqi Peshmerga. The United States has arrangements in place with the Iraqi Peshmerga to ensure that United States personnel can receive important intelligence from captured Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant personnel.

37. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Carter, if we capture al-Baghdadi or Ayman al-Zawahiri, where would we detain them for long term law of war detention and interrogation?

Secretary CARTER. The appropriate disposition for a detainee is determined on the basis of all the facts and circumstances, including the national security interests of the United States and its allies and partners, and the conduct the detainee has engaged in, consistent with U.S. domestic law and international law. Depending on the circumstances, detainees may be prosecuted in the United States, detained in their home countries, or detained in a third country. The Department makes assessments regarding the appropriate disposition of detainees on a case-by-case basis.

MORE EFFECTIVE TARGETING OF ISIS

38. Senator AYOTTE. General Dunford, according to CENTCOM, since October 23 of last year, there have been 60,083 coalition sorties and only 8,751 weapons releases. That is about 85% of sorties returning without weapons release. What explains that number of sorties not engaging the enemy and what can we do to better identify and target ISIS?

General DUNFORD. A myriad of factors influence both the number of sorties flown and weapons dropped; as of the end of 2015, the percentage of strike sorties that have gone kinetic (as measured by combatant commander airstrike accounting methodology) reached nearly 60%. Additionally, there is a constant requirement for strike support sorties such as ISR, air refueling, and other support flights that comprise the total number of sorties flown to date which leads to a varying rate of kinetic activity.

ABADI'S PERFORMANCE

39. Senator AYOTTE. General Dunford, what is Iraqi Prime Minister Abadi doing to create an inclusive Iraqi government and Iraqi security forces?

General DUNFORD. While he faces substantial domestic challenges, Prime Minister Abadi remains committed to building inclusive governance and Iraqi Security Forces. From a military and security standpoint, he and his government leaders have made progress in mobilizing Sunnis into official security institutions, particularly in Anbar and Ninewa Provinces. PM Abadi recognizes the necessity and efficacy of the Iraqi tribal mobilization program and has sought ways to keep its members paid and equipped. At PM Abadi's directive, the Ministry of Defense removed several thousand "ghost soldiers" from Iraqi Army payrolls, increased the provincial cap for Sunni forces in Anbar, and recalled several thousand Sunni police. For greater detail on other Iraqi government efforts, I would refer you to the Department of State.

40. Senator AYOTTE. General Dunford, what does Iraqi Prime Minister Abadi need to do that he is not, in order to create an inclusive Iraqi government and Iraqi security forces?

General DUNFORD. Prime Minister Abadi must balance the influence and interests of multiple internal and external actors in a difficult, fiscally constrained political environment. He also must minimize Iranian influence over Shi'a militia and account for the role played by the Iraqi Shi'a who rallied to the Iraqi national cause by enrolling in the Popular Mobilization Forces. He and other government leaders will have to continue their work to remove "ghost soldiers" from Iraqi Army payrolls, account for the Iraqi Security Forces' equipment, expand efforts to mobilize Sunnis into official government security institutions, enact institutional reforms, and appoint and empower capable subordinate commanders.

SUNNI INCLUSION IN IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

41. Senator AYOTTE. General Dunford, what is the sectarian makeup of both the six Iraqi Army brigades and the 2100 counter-terrorism service personnel that CENTCOM reportedly helped train?

General DUNFORD. We estimate the ISF units trained by CENTCOM are 80% Shia, 15% Sunni, and 5% other. This is an overall sectarian makeup for all six Iraqi Army Brigades with the understanding that each brigade makeup will vary depend-

ing on their respective region. In addition, we estimate Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service personnel are 90% Shia and 10% other.

JORDAN'S PERSPECTIVE

42. Senator AYOTTE. General Dunford, during your recent meeting with King Abdullah of Jordan, what were the King's leading concerns?

General DUNFORD. The King is clearly concerned how the Counter-ISIL campaign might impact Jordan, either through ISIL attacks near Jordan's borders with Syria and Iraq or through a threat internal to the Kingdom. His Majesty is concerned, in particular, that as the coalition achieves military success against ISIL in northern Syria, the ISIL threat may move south, which would pose an increased threat to Jordan's borders. Similarly, the King is concerned about a sudden refugee influx due to military operations against ISIL or other opposition groups. Military actions in the south of Syria could displace people who would seek safe haven in Jordan.

43. Senator AYOTTE. General Dunford, what was King Abdullah's assessment of U.S. policy and strategy in the region?

General DUNFORD. The King was appreciative of United States support to Jordan. We have worked hard to deliver needed munitions and equipment to the Jordanian Armed Forces, to ensure they can continue to actively contribute to the counter-ISIL coalition. King Abdullah also agrees with our assessment that we are having military success against ISIL. He has concerns about ISIL encroaching on Jordan's borders and wants more assistance in hardening Jordan's defenses. The Joint Staff can provide additional details of our efforts on behalf of Jordan and the King's assessment in a classified setting.

44. Senator AYOTTE. General Dunford, what was King Abdullah's assessment of the campaign against ISIS?

General DUNFORD. King Abdullah shares our assessment that the coalition has degraded ISIL's capability. King is concerned that military success in northern Syria could push ISIL south, creating pressure on the Jordanian-Syrian border. That possibility concerns me as well. The Joint Staff can provide additional detail on the King's assessment and coalition efforts in support of Jordan in a classified setting.

NATO

45. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Carter and General Dunford, in a recent hearing, General Jones expressed concern about NATO's future. Do you share General Jones' concern that NATO could be in danger?

Secretary CARTER. Although the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the most successful and enduring alliance in history, we are not taking its future for granted. The United States will continue to lead the Alliance as NATO adapts to evolving challenges on its eastern and southern flanks. With continued support from Congress, the Department will set the conditions for a transition from focusing on reassurance to an enhanced rotational deterrence presence on NATO's eastern flank.

On the southern flank of NATO in Europe, we will continue to work with both European and Middle Eastern Allies to defeat ISIL, end the civil war in Syria, and improve stability throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Most of the international community supports these efforts. The United States will continue to urge Russia to support these efforts as well. Ultimately the future of the Alliance is assured by its shared political values of human rights, democratic governance, and respect for the rule of law. These values, which stand in stark contrast to those of our adversaries, underwrite Alliance solidarity and the dedication to the principle that Alliance security is indivisible.

General DUNFORD. It is my assessment that NATO solidarity and commitment remain strong. Alliance engagement in out-of-sector military operations for more than ten years has significantly enhanced our interoperability and generated valuable lessons that NATO is leveraging to combat new and emerging threats emanating from its southern and eastern flanks.

As NATO adapts to its new security environment, U.S. leadership is important. On NATO's eastern flank, we are setting conditions for an enhanced rotational deterrence presence. On NATO's southern flank, we are working with both European and Middle Eastern Allies to enhance military capability, defeat ISIL, and improve stability.

46. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Carter and General Dunford, is the Department of Defense re-evaluating U.S. defense posture in Europe?

Secretary CARTER. The Department continuously reviews its overseas force posture and looks holistically at how best to balance forward-stationed forces with those based in the United States that can deploy overseas when necessary. Any adjustments to the Department's posture in Europe would be informed by the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) Commander's requests and balanced against the Department's global commitments. The Department continues to use the global force management process to surge additional forces that are ready to operate in response to Combatant Commander requests.

General DUNFORD. Yes, we are re-evaluating our defense posture in Europe to ensure we can respond in a timely manner to crises and contingencies in order to support USEUCOM objectives. Those objectives are to assure, deter, and defend against Russian aggression; support ongoing and future contingency operations; counter transnational threats; and help build our partners' capabilities to help us accomplish these missions.

Leveraging continued Congressional support, funded through the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), we are already increasing responsiveness and readiness by pre-positioning ammunition, fuel and equipment for use in regional training and exercises, as well as improving infrastructure that enhances NATO operations and enables Eastern Allies to rapidly receive reinforcements. The ERI also enables us to maintain our increased rotational force presence along NATO's eastern flank under Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE (OAR) to demonstrate NATO commitment to deter and counter Russian malign influence, coercion, and aggression. In 2016, under the auspices of OAR, we will preposition additional European Activity Sets, which includes the full complement of equipment for one armor brigade combat team. Moving forward, we will continually assess what additional steps are required to meet the demands of a new and evolving security environment in Europe.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOE DONNELLY

COUNTERING IRAN

47. Senator DONNELLY. Secretary Carter, there is a wide range of Iranian activities and threats that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) does not address, including the recent ballistic missile test, Iran's support for terrorism, the American citizens they continue to hold hostage, and their stream of anti-Semitism and hate directed toward our allies in Israel, among others. It is critical to both the success of the Iran nuclear deal and our broader strategic interests in the Middle East that we have a clear, effective strategy to push back on Iran in the areas not mentioned or addressed by the nuclear agreement. What are we doing today, tomorrow, and next year to step up our efforts to counter Iran's influence and activities across the Middle East?

Secretary CARTER. The United States will continue to utilize its posture, preparations, plans, and partnerships to address the threats posed by Iran to United States interests in the Middle East. The Department remains keenly aware of Iran's support for militants and terrorists, its provocative naval activity, and the threats posed by its conventional military forces. The United States will continue to support efforts to hold Iran accountable for its destabilizing behavior. The United States will continue to work through the United Nations to enforce non-nuclear sanctions and will maintain United States sanctions against Iran in response to its terrorist activities, human rights abuses, and ballistic missile program.

The United States remains well postured to counter Iranian threats through partnerships and preparations in the Middle East. The Department will maintain a robust and dynamic regional military presence and will reinforce security partnerships throughout the region. The Department of Defense will continue to: maintain plans and posture to bolster the security of our friends and partners in the Middle East, including Israel; defend against Iranian aggression; ensure freedom of navigation in the Gulf; and check Iranian malign influence. The Department will also ensure that the President has options available for any contingency that might arise.

48. Senator DONNELLY. How are our current efforts to counter Iran's influence different from what we've done in the past?

Secretary CARTER. Current efforts to counter Iran's influence build on and strengthen our previous efforts. Department of Defense (DOD) efforts in this regard are part of a whole-of-government strategy. In particular, DOD continues to focus its plans, posture, preparations, and partnerships on countering the myriad threats

posed by Iran and remains committed to countering Iranian threats to United States interests in the region. This includes deterring Iranian aggression, addressing the threats posed by Iran's unconventional and conventional military forces, and ensuring that the President has options to address any contingency scenario that might arise with respect to Iran. DOD will also continue to build upon extensive regional security partnerships to challenge any future threats posed by Iran.

General DUNFORD. Since the United States and Iran continue to offer two very different narratives, DOD's efforts, post-JCPOA, remain largely unchanged. The United States attracts allies and supporters through policies based on inclusion and freedom, while Iran attracts its surrogates and proxies through policies based on exclusion and violent revolution. Despite Iran's and the United States' overlapping interests of countering ISIL and implementing the JCPOA, DOD continues to plan and prepare contingency scenarios for Iran. In response to the Camp David Summit, DOD is pursuing new initiatives with our Gulf Partners on increasing security cooperation, conducting combined-joint exercises, and developing an integrated ballistic missile defense system.

IRANIAN BALLISTIC MISSILES

49. Senator DONNELLY. Secretary Carter, Iran has the largest and most diverse ballistic missile arsenal in the Middle East. This is a serious and bipartisan concern among members of the Armed Services Committee. My colleague Sen. Ayotte has diligently highlighted the risks posed by Iran's missile program, and Sen. Sessions and I worked together this year on the Strategic Forces Subcommittee to fund missile defense programs in the United States and Israel. What are your priorities in missile defense, whether here at home or through partnerships with Israel and the Gulf States, to counter the threats posed by Iran?

Secretary CARTER. I share your concern about Iran's ballistic missile program. First and foremost, the homeland is already protected from limited Iranian and North Korean ballistic missile threats. Moreover, the Department places the highest priority on improving the reliability of the current Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system to defend the homeland against a North Korean or possible future Iranian intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) attack. The Department is working with industry to redesign the exo-atmospheric kill vehicle to address identified reliability issues. The Department has also funded a Long-Range Discrimination Radar (LRDR) that is currently projected to be operational by 2020 and will improve our capability to discern the reentry vehicle in a threat cluster. Additionally, as then-Secretary Hagel announced in March 2013, the Department is increasing the number of ground-based interceptors to the GMD system by 14 to a total of 44 by the end of 2017.

In Europe, the Department is continuing to implement the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA). The Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System (AAMDS) in Romania will achieve Technical Capability Declaration by the end of this year. By spring 2016, all EPAA Phase 2 elements to include the AAMDS in Romania will be operational. Construction on the Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System in Redzikowo, Poland, will begin in early 2016 with completion expected in the 2018 timeframe.

The United States has provided \$3.69 billion in missile defense assistance to Israel since 2001. This investment in Israel's national security has supported production of the Iron Dome defense system against rockets and mortars as well as co-development of David's Sling and Arrow weapon systems that can shoot down longer-range rockets and ballistic missiles.

The objective in the Middle East is to maintain a robust missile defense posture to protect deployed forces, and to establish a regional missile defense architecture in which all of the Gulf Cooperation Council states participate and contribute to the extent practical, leading to a layered defense network.

SYRIAN SAFE ZONE

50. Senator DONNELLY. The safe zone versus "no-fly" zone in Syria was discussed during the SASC hearing on the United States Strategy in the Middle East. We all agree that the crisis in Syria is far from over and it is time that the United States and regional partners more aggressively address the human suffering there. If we were to establish a humanitarian safe zone in Syria, what would the force requirements look like—hypothetically?

Secretary CARTER. Establishing a humanitarian safe zone would require a significant increase in forces because it would need to consist of both a no-fly zone to control airspace and a ground force component to clear and hold territory in Syria to create the "safe" area. Securing a humanitarian safe zone would be exceptionally

difficult for a number of reasons, including that extremist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Nusra Front would attempt to infiltrate such a zone. The Syrian regime, backed by Iran and Russia, would also likely contest the establishment of the humanitarian safe zone, increasing the cost, complexity, and risk associated with it. There is also a significant risk that the establishment of safe-zone would fracture the counter-ISIL coalition.

The Department of Defense estimates that a safe zone would require approximately 120 additional aircraft in theater, and approximately 20,000 military personnel to conduct operations to clear and hold the zone in Syria. These estimates can vary depending on the size and geographic location of the area as well as the Syrian government's response. These numbers do not take into account the additional logistics necessary to support such an increased force.

General DUNFORD. Establishing a humanitarian safe zone would require a significant increase in forces because it would need to consist of both a no-fly zone to control airspace and a ground force component to clear and hold territory in Syria to create the "safe" area. Securing a humanitarian safe zone would be exceptionally difficult for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that extremist groups such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Nusra Front would attempt to infiltrate the zone. The conventional U.S. forces required to implement such a zone would likely become a magnet for local extremist actors. It is also likely that the Syrian regime, with support from Russia and Iran, would militarily oppose Coalition occupation of their sovereign territory. Absent an international legal basis, such as a United Nations Security Council Resolution, there is also significant risk of fracturing the counter-ISIL Coalition.

The Department of Defense (DOD) estimates that a safe zone would require approximately 120 additional aircraft in theater and approximately 20,000 military personnel to conduct operations to clear and hold the zone in Syria. These estimates do not take into account the additional logistics tail necessary to support such an increased force. Those numbers could vary significantly depending upon the size and location of the geographic area and the Syrian government response.

51. Senator DONNELLY. What type of commitment would that entail in terms of personnel, security, and funding?

Secretary CARTER. Over the past two years, the Department of Defense has extensively examined options for a no-fly zone or safe zone in Syria based on geographic scope and objective. Both options would be a major military undertaking and would likely pull resources away from the counter-Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) campaign as well as harm readiness to execute other war plans.

In terms of security in such a safe zone, extremist groups on the ground such as ISIL and al-Nusra Front would attempt to infiltrate such as zone. The conventional U.S. forces required to implement such a zone would also likely become a magnet for local extremist actors. The Syrian regime, with support from Russia and Iran, would also militarily contest Coalition occupation of its sovereign territory. There is also a significant risk that the establishment of safe-zone would fracture the counter-ISIL coalition. The costs to establish a safe zone must account for both aircraft to enforce a no-fly zone and ground forces in Syria to clear and hold territory to create the "safe" area.

The cost for a safe zone would be approximately \$400 million dollars per month, depending on the location and size of the zone that would be implemented as well as the nature of the Syrian government response. This estimate does not include deployment costs; all forces are assumed to be in theater already. This estimate also does not include costs associated with infrastructure construction; all required infrastructure is assumed to exist. Finally, this estimate does not assume any combat losses.

In terms of other resources, establishing a humanitarian safe zone would require approximately 120 additional aircraft in theater, and 20,000 military personnel conducting operations to clear and hold the zone in Syria. These estimates do not take into account the logistics necessary to support such an increased force, and also vary depending upon the size and location of the geographic area as well as the nature of the Syrian government response. It is also unclear whether Coalition partners are prepared to contribute manpower or funding to a safe zone.

General DUNFORD. Over the past two years, the Department of Defense has extensively examined options for a no-fly zone or safe zone in Syria based on geographic scope and objective. In general, the commitment in terms of personnel, security, and funding that a Syrian safe zone would require are substantial.

In terms of security in such a safe zone, extremist groups on the ground such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Nusra Front would attempt to infiltrate such a zone. The conventional U.S. forces required to implement such

a zone would likely become magnets for local extremist actors and targets for asymmetrical attacks. The Syrian regime, with support from Russia and Iran, may also militarily contest Coalition occupation of its sovereign territory.

In terms of other resources, establishing a humanitarian safe zone would require approximately 120 additional aircraft in theater, and 20,000 military personnel conducting operations to clear and hold the zone in Syria. These estimates do not take into account the logistics tail necessary to support such an increased force, and those numbers could vary significantly depending upon the size and location of the geographic area as well as the nature of the Syrian government response. It is also unclear whether Coalition partners are prepared to contribute manpower or funding to a safe zone.

The costs to establish a safe zone must account for both aircraft to enforce a no-fly zone and ground forces in Syria to clear and hold territory to create the "safe" area. The rough fiscal cost for a safe zone would be approximately \$400 million dollars per month, which might vary depending on the location and size of the zone implemented as well as the nature of the Syrian government response. This estimate does not include deployment costs, as all forces are assumed to be in theater already. This estimate also does not include costs associated with infrastructure construction, as all required infrastructure is assumed to exist. Finally, this estimate does not assume any combat losses to personnel or major air and ground equipment.

52. Senator DONNELLY. Are there previous humanitarian operations that would provide elements for this type of mission such as Kosovo, Turkey, Fukushima, or Pakistan?

Secretary CARTER. Department of Defense (DOD) planners, along with interagency counterparts, absolutely consider the lessons from prior relevant humanitarian operations as they create options for mitigating the Syrian humanitarian crisis. In addition, DOD is currently contributing to humanitarian efforts in Syria and the region. DOD is providing approximately \$115 million worth of humanitarian supplies (including transportation costs) to Syrian refugees and other persons displaced as the result of the ongoing Syrian crisis and conflict in Iraq.

General DUNFORD. When planning current operations, we look for commonalities with past operations that may provide helpful insight for contingency planning; however, every operation contains a unique mix of circumstances that drive a tailored response. That said, we are in agreement with the humanitarian community, which generally does not support "safe zones," as they imply a level of safety that often cannot be absolutely guaranteed or enforced.

53. Senator DONNELLY. What type of interagency support would be required for a mission such as this?

Secretary CARTER. Establishing a safe zone in Syria would require significant interagency support. The participation of the Department of Defense, Intelligence Community, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of State, and the Department of Homeland Security, among others, would all likely be required for such a mission, although the exact nature and degree of support would depend on the specifics of the zone established.

General DUNFORD. While the Interagency (IA) has reviewed the viability of safe zones on multiple occasions at the National Security Council level, and each time has agreed that establishing such a zone is not appropriate or viable, the first requirement for a safe zone would be to gain IA concurrence.

Should the decision to create a safe zone be taken, the IA would need to exert diplomatic effort to gain a legal basis for establishing the zone. Further diplomatic action would be necessary to garner support among allies and regional partners to contribute the forces and/or resources required to protect the safe area against attacks by both ground and air. This would include sufficient ground forces to safeguard the zone from rockets, missiles, artillery, and other conventional or terror threats.

A safe zone mission would then involve coordinating the actions of participating humanitarian and Non-Governmental Organizations. IA support would be required to establish institutions to help resolve inevitable conflicts between the multi-cultural and sectarian inhabitants of the zone. The IA would also have a role to play within international institutions in maintaining governance accounting for differences between those who live in the zone and those who are temporarily resettled there.

54. Senator DONNELLY. General Dunford, with all operations, we must consider the potential challenges and unintended consequences. Can you provide some of those challenges specifically for humanitarian and security operations?

General DUNFORD. Safe zones are natural targets. The primary challenge of establishing a Syrian Safe Zone is providing adequate resources to protect and sustain a refugee population. These resources, including the type and quantity of joint or multinational forces, humanitarian supplies and equipment, and diplomatic and legal justifications, are driven by the nature of the threat and the basic needs of refugees.

A safe zone in Syria will have unintended consequences. These may include the departure of aid organizations due to security concerns or to maintain their neutrality. If the safe zone is not endorsed by the UN Security Council, UN organizations may be restricted by policy, security, and liability concerns. This could cause NGOs that depend on UN funding to also depart the zone. The safe zone may also attract a significant number of out-of-state regional refugees seeking protection and assistance. Similarly, neighboring countries may coerce refugee movement towards the safe zone. Both the push and pull of refugees may overwhelm the capacity to provide adequate security and assistance.

Other challenges associated with the establishment of safe zones in such a complicated part of Syria include: (1) Risk of combat against Syrian/Russian/Iranian forces, which would cause a much greater humanitarian problem; (2) Risk of fracturing the counter-ISIL coalition. Absent an international legal basis, many coalition members do not support violation of Syrian sovereignty; (3) Risk of significant readiness reduction for forces postured against other global commitments; and (4) Risk of weakening the counter-ISIL campaign because of diversion of resources

55. Senator DONNELLY. Secretary Carter, what type of Department of Defense personnel have the expertise for planning and conducting this type of operation?

Secretary CARTER. At the planning level, the Department of Defense (DOD) has analyzed several safe zone options in Syria for the Administration's consideration, but does not recommend any such option at this time. Establishment of a safe zone would involve air and ground forces to secure the territory and airspace for humanitarian operations. Therefore, DOD personnel with expertise in air and ground combat operations would be involved in planning and conducting this type of operation. DOD personnel would also plan and conduct any such operation in coordination with other interagency partners with experience in humanitarian operations.

